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APPEAL

TO THE

AMERICAN CHURCHES,

WITH A PLAN FOR

CATHOLIC UNION.

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PREFACE.

The following Appeal is affectionately addressed to the American churches of every denomination, in the conviction, that the subject of which it treats, is of incalculable importance to the conversion of the world; and in the hope, that the plan of union proposed, is accordant with the spirit of the divine Master. On the American churches, so happily exempt from all entrammeling alliance with civil government, God seems specially to have devolved the duty to review the history of his visible kingdom, and, instructed by the lessons of former ages, to adopt an organization which will arrest the intestine strife of christian brethren, and unite all their energies in effective efforts to extend the triumphs of the cross to every nation upon earth; an organization, which, whilst it will restore the church to the substantial unity of the *apostolic age*, will also *preserve that unity throughout the whole extent of her predicted triumphs over the heathen world.*

The writer feels it alike due to himself, to his subject, and to those of whom he asks a hearing, to state that the sentiments of the following appeal were not hastily adopted, but are the deliberate result of a conscientious study of the subject, first urged on him by providential circumstances about twenty years ago, and frequently since pursued by extensive investigations into the organization and experience of the church in the different ages of her history. In presenting these results, he sought the utmost brevity; and yet, as the popular reader was also contemplated, some observations and statements were necessarily introduced, which would be superfluous, were he writing for the learned alone.

He now commends these pages to the candid and indulgent examination of "those that love the Lord," of every name. He requests them to test the sentiments advanced, not by their ecclesiastical standards, which are the work of uninspired though good men, but by the law and the testimony, by the inspired word of God. Let them solemnly inquire, whether the Protestant churches, organized and operating on the plan here proposed, would not approximate much nearer to the apostolic church than they now do, whether they would not act much more efficiently and harmoniously in advancing the triumphs of the cross in the heathen and papal world, and whether we might not even hope again to see the days, when surrounding observers will exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another."

If much is to be effected in this great enterprise, it must be through the coöperation and influence of religious editors and other prominent individuals in every denomination of the christian church, by the public expression of their opinions, and by the discussion of the subject in ecclesiastical judicatories, in theological institutions, and by individual congregations. The writer therefore requests editors of religious periodicals and papers favorable to the object, whose dimensions admit of it, to transfer to their columns, unaltered, the entire plan itself, in one or several articles, including also the *Apostolic, Protestant Confession*, and the mode of operation. He also particularly commends this Appeal to the "American Society for the promotion of Christian Union," and all similar Associations that may be formed in our land. And most of all would he commend it to the blessing and disposal of that divine Saviour, from a desire to advance whose glory, he trusts these pages proceeded.

S. S. SCHMUCKER.

Theol. Sem. Gettysburg,
March 26, 1838.

APPEAL, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

Πάτερ ἅγιε, τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου, οὕς δέδωκάς μοι, ἵνα ὦσιν ἕν, καθὼς ἡμεῖς.—JESUS.

Εἷς Κύριος, μία πίστις, ἓν βάπτισμα.—PAUL.

WHEN the sincere and unsophisticated Christian contemplates the image of the church as delineated both in its theory and practice by the Saviour and his apostles, he is charmed by the delightful spirit of unity and brotherly love by which it is characterized. When he hears the beloved disciple declare "God is love, and they that dwell in love dwell in God:" and again, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love:" and again, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another—If any man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also."—When the Christian listens to such declarations as these, and numerous others of similar import; when forgetting things as they exist around him, he brings his whole soul under the influence of this love to God and the brethren; he perceives the moral beauty of these sentiments, and finds his heart vibrate in delightful unison with them. But when he awakes from this fascinating dream and beholds the body of Christ rent into different divisions, separately organized, professing different creeds, denouncing each other as in error, and often times, hating and being hated; his spirit is grieved within him, and he asks how can these things be among brethren? In the sacred record he looks in vain for the sectarian parties which

now constitute all that is seen of the church of the Redeemer; he finds nothing there of Lutherans, of Presbyterians, of Methodists, of Episcopalians, of Baptists. But he sees that when the formation of such parties was attempted at Corinth, Paul deemed it necessary to write them a long letter, and besought them by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to have no divisions among them. The Christian is therefore constrained to mourn over the desolations of Zion and to meet the solemn inquiry, cannot a balm be found for the ulcerous divisions which deface the body of Christ?

Many such hearts there happily are at the present day, which are relenting from the rigor of party organization and sectarian asperity. The love of Christ, that sacred flame which warms them, and bids them strive together for the conversion of a world, also melts down the walls of partition, which might well enough keep Jews asunder from Gentiles, but was never permitted to sever one Jew from another, and much less ought now to separate a Christian from his brother. Many are pondering these things in their hearts, and asking ought brethren to be thus estranged? ought Ephraim thus to envy Judah, and Judah to vex Ephraim? Their number too is multiplying. Brotherly love and christian liberality are on the whole progressive, and tender increasing facilities,—whilst they urge the imperious obligation of this inquiry upon every enlightened and sanctified intellect. Happily many of the ablest heads and noblest hearts in Christendom feel called to review *the ground, which the Protestant churches have been led to assume partly by option, partly by inconsideration, and partly by the coërcion of circumstances.* The successful prosecution of this inquiry demands the casting off of the prejudices of education and long established habits, a recurrence to the elementary principles of Christianity, of christian doctrine, of christian government, of christian duty: and the men, be they ministers or be they laymen, who would regard this subject with indifference, or dismiss it with a sneer, may well inquire whether the love of Christ dwells in them. In this great concern not self-interest, but the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, should be the motive of our actions; not victory, but truth should be our aim.

In this incipient stage of our discussion, we would premise a few principles, or draw a few lines, by which the general course of our investigation may be recognized and the results in some degree be anticipated at which we shall arrive. It is admitted,

a) As one house cannot contain all the Christians in the world, or in a particular country, there must necessarily be *different houses* of worship.

b) As all Christians in a particular country cannot be incorporated into one congregation to enjoy the ordinances of the gospel, and to execute the duties of mutual edification, supervision and discipline; there must be *different congregations*, as there were in the days of the apostles; whatever may be the proper principle for their construction, and the proper bond for their union with each other.

c) We premise as a point conceded, that all the several denominations termed orthodox, which are but clusters of such different congregations, are parts of the true visible church of Christ; because, in the conscientious judgment of all enlightened Christians, they hold the essentials of the gospel scheme of faith and practice; and secondly, because the Saviour himself has acknowledged them as such by the seal of his grace and Spirit. "When James, Cephas and John perceived *the grace that was given to me*," says Paul, to the Galatians,* "they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship." And where is the bigot, who at the present day, would claim his to be the only true church, and thus repudiate all others as synagogues of Satan?

d) As these denominations hold dissentient views on some nonessential points, it is demonstrable that all except one of them must entertain some error. For of two contrary opinions only one can be true. But the pretension that any one sect is right in all things, and all others in error so far as they diverge from this one, is highly improbable in itself, is forbidden by christian humility, by a knowledge of human nature, and by the amount of talent, learning and piety in all the several churches. Hence some error, in all probability, is an attribute of each sect.

e) Finally, we premise that ministers and laymen, though pious, are fallible, are sanctified but in part and liable to temptation from secular motives and feelings, even in things pertaining to the Redeemer's kingdom. Hence they are all under obligation to review their course of thought and action, and ought to be willing, for the glory of their God and Saviour, to retrace and amend whatever may be found amiss. This ob-

* Chap. 2: 9.

ligation devolves alike upon the writer and the reader. With a deep impression of its importance, its claims are urged on your present attention.

Under the presumption therefore that in these diversities of opinion we are all more or less in error, let us inquire whether it is right that the body of Christ should on account of these diversities be rent into so many different parts, under circumstances creating different interests in each, and strongly tending to alienate their affections, and dissolve that bond of fraternal love, by which they should be united, or whether it is the duty of Christians to endeavor to heal these divisions, and promote unity among all whom they profess to regard as disciples of Christ. The will of our divine Master will become apparent to us whilst we successively consider,

I. *The Scriptural injunctions.*

II. *The example of the apostles and primitive Christians.*

III. *The consequences which these divisions produce.*

In the wealthy and corrupt city of Corinth, a christian church nad been planted by Paul, watered by the eloquent Apollos, and blessed by him, from whom alone can come any genuine increase. In this church, it seems, there appeared symptoms of the spirit of sectarianism, that spirit, "which now worketh" not only "among the children of disobedience," who have a name to live whilst they are dead;" but which often mars the enjoyment and tarnishes the graces of the members of Christ's spiritual body. The Corinthian brethren had long been familiar with the several sects of heathen philosophers and religionists and by a natural transition were led to array themselves into parties according to some religious differences which arose among them. Some said "I am of Paul," probably because he first laid the foundation of the Corinthian church;* others said "I am of Apollos," perhaps on account of his superior eloquence; and others said "I am of Cephas," either because like Peter, they cherished Jewish predilections, or were converted by him elsewhere. Here then was an attempt to introduce different sects or religious denominations into the church of Christ, ranged under different leaders such as Paul, Apollos, Peter, Luther, Calvin, Zuingli or Wesley; and what are the feelings of the noble-minded Paul? Does he approve of such a course? Let us hear his own words, my brethren, and pray that the spirit of our lacerated

* Chap. 3: 10. Acts 18: 11.

Master may enable us to understand them. "I beseech you, brethren, by the Lord Jesus Christ," (by the hope you cherish through him, by his suffering, by his blood), I beseech you, "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms (σχίσματα) or sects among you; but that ye be joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions (ἔριδες) among you: namely that every one of you saith," either "I am of Paul" (he is my leader), "or I am of Apollos, or I am of Peter, or I am of Christ. Is Christ," (i. e. the body of Christ) "divided? Was Paul" (or either of those whose names ye assume and whom ye wish to place at the side of Christ as leaders or heads of the church) "crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul (or of Apollos, or of Peter, so that ye were received into *their* church, and not into the church of *Christ?*) "I thank God," (since ye thus abuse the privilege of having been baptized) "that I baptized none of you except Crispus" (the ruler of the synagogue) "and Gaius" (whose hospitality I enjoyed whilst at Corinth;) so that ye cannot with any semblance of truth allege, that I baptized you in my own name and thus formed a peculiar sect of Christians.

Such is the powerful and decided testimony given by the inspired apostle Paul, against the spirit of sectarianism. Ought not every man who believes himself a Christian, to feel the force of this rebuke and ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do to heal thy wounded body? The apostle does not even introduce into his argument the points of diversity among them, on account of which they were arraying themselves into different parties. The simple facts that they were baptized into Christ, and into Christ alone, i. e. were members of the church in good standing, and that Christ must not be divided, are the only arguments which he deems requisite to prove the impropriety of their divisions and of their assumption of different names. He would have them Christians and nothing but Christians; not Pauline Christians, nor Apolline, nor Cephine, nor Lutheran, nor Calvinistic, nor Wesleyan Christians, not because he had any antipathy to Apollos or Peter; but because any such divisions based on difference of opinions or personal attachments naturally tended to rend asunder the body of Christ. Let it be distinctly remembered then, that the argument of Paul for the unity of the Redeemer's visible church is twofold; first, he maintains that this

unity and the impropriety of divisions on party-grounds are evidently presupposed by the fact, that all its members are baptized into the name of Christ alone; and secondly from the fact that all divisions based on difference, are equivalent to dividing the one body of Christ. Nor does he here affix any limitations to these principles, and no uninspired authority is competent to prescribe any others than such as may indubitably flow from other inspired declarations or from the obvious nature of Christianity itself. The apostle Paul therefore distinctly forbids the cutting up of those whom he would acknowledge as Christians at all, into different parties or sects. And this he does even by anticipation, for in all probability, these parties had not yet fully separated from one another, nor renounced ecclesiastical inter-communion. Yet there were in the apostolic age, as well as at present, men who claimed to be Christians, but whom this great apostle was unwilling to acknowledge as such, and commanded "after the first and second admonition, to reject."*

In the passage, "A man that is a heretic (*αἱρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον*) after the first and second admonition reject," the apostle himself limits the application of the principles above urged on the Corinthians, by showing that although he forbade the formation of sects or divisions among Christians on the ground of difference, yet there were occasionally persons in the church, who if incorrigible, deserved to be cast out of it altogether. The crime which in the judgment of Paul merited this punishment, he designates by the term *heretical* (*αἱρετικὸν*), which in the English language distinctly refers to one who denies a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. The original word also sometimes seems to have this sense; but more frequently it signifies a schismatic, one who makes a division, or forms a sect. In the former acceptation, the passage inculcates the salutary duty, acknowledged and practised by all the orthodox churches of the land, of excluding from their communion and from membership, those who deny a *fundamental* doctrine of the gospel, that is a doctrine unitedly believed by all the orthodox churches, and regarded as essential by them. Some denominations would exercise still greater rigor, and exclude from their communion the believers of doctrines held by such sister churches, as they professedly and sincerely regard as churches of Christ. But Paul wholly repudiates those divisions grounded on diversity of

* Titus 3: 10.

sentiment, which would render it possible for a brother Christian, when ejected from one portion of the Saviour's church to find admission to another. At all events, the church in his day was not thus divided, and those whose excommunication he enjoined, must in his judgment have forfeited all claim to the christian profession. The apostles's rule, therefore, as limited by himself, would be that we ought not to separate from our brethren, for any error which we believe them to entertain, and which does not in our most conscientious judgment deprive them of all claim to the character of Christians.

The primitive import of the Greek word *αἵρεσις* (heresy) is *selection, choice.* Thus it is used by many ancient Greek writers. The following passage of Aeschines Socrat. (Dial. II. 3,) amounts, if not to a definition, yet to the most appropriate exemplification of this sense of the term: *εἰ δέ τίς σοι διδόιη αἵρεσιν τουτοῖν, πότερον ἂν βούλοιο,* In this sense we also meet it in the Septuagint; (Lev. 27: 18 and 21,) as equivalent to נְדָבָה free will, voluntarily. It is also employed to designate a *peculiar kind of discipline* or *mode of living*, that has been voluntarily assumed. But its more common signification* is *schism, division, sect.* Thus Dionys. Halic. (Ep. I. ad Ammaeum. c. 7.) says of Aristotle: He was not the leader or head of a school, nor did he form a *sect* of his own (*οὔτε σχολῆς ἡγούμενος, οὔτ' ἰδίαν πεποιηκὼς αἵρεσιν.*) It is used by classic writers to designate the several philosophic sects, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Peripatetics, etc. It occurs nine times in the New Testament and in the majority of cases it is translated *sect* in the common version. In the other cases it might with equal propriety be rendered in the same way,† as indeed it is by many distinguished translators. In its primitive and most current signification, therefore, the word (*αἵρεσις*) *conveys no reproach.* It is used to designate the sect of Pharisees,‡ the sect

* Rosenmüller defines *αἵρεσις* thus: "*Αιρεσεως* vox, per se media est. Ubi in malam partem sumitur significat idem quod *σχίσμα;* sed restringitur ad ea dissidea quae fiunt ex opinionum diversitate.

† 2 Pet. 2: 1. 1 Cor. 11: 9.

‡ Acts 15: 5: But there rose up certain of the *sect* (*αἵρεσις*) of the Pharisees, who believed saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. Acts 25: 6: The Jews knew me from the beginning if they would testify, that after the most straitest *sect* (*αἵρεσις*) of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.

of Sadducees,* and the sect of the Nazarenes or Christians.† In all the passages where it is rendered sect, in the common version, it signifies a party of persons who have separated themselves from others professedly pursuing the same end, over whom they profess to have some advantages. Here we have sects substantially corresponding to those of our days, sects based not on geographical lines, but on doctrinal diversities like our own, and yet what does Paul say concerning such sects in the church of Christ? Using the very same word by which he designated the sect of the Pharisees, (in an adjective form,) he declares: *Him that is a sectarian man* (αἱρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον) an originator or supporter of sects in the christian church, after the first and second admonition, *reject*, exclude from your communion and intercourse, avoid. Here we have the apostle again distinctly condemning the formation of sects in the christian church, using the very identical term by which the Pharisees and Sadducees are designated in the New Testament and the several sects of their philosophers by classic Greeks.

Again, in the third chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians,‡ Paul denounces such divisions in the christian church as "carnal." "For, (says he) whereas there is among you envying and strife and *divisions*, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not *carnal?*" How then can divisions essentially similar, among modern Christians, be pleasing in the sight of God? In his letter to the Galatians,§ this same apostle classes these heresies or divisions among "the works of *the flesh*." He beseeches the Romans,‖ to "mark, (σκοπεῖν) attentively to observe, or watch those, "who cause *divisions* and offences, contrary to the doctrine (or rather the instruction or advice) which ye have learned: and avoid them." But it would be an endless work to present all the passages, in which the sacred volume inculcates the unity of the church, and deprecates its disruption into sects. Let one other passage terminate this branch of our argument. To the same Corinthians,¶

* Acts 5: 17: Then the high priest rose up and all they that were with him, which is the *sect* (αἵρεσις) of the Sadducees.

† Acts 24: 5, 14. 28: 22. ‡ v. 3: 4.

§ Gal. 5: 20: The works of the flesh are—wrath, strife, heresy, or sects, divisions.

‖ 16: 17. ¶ 12: 12.

he says: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many.—Now they are many members, yet but one body—That *there should be no schism* in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."* It would seem then to be irresistibly evident, that the unity of the church ought to be sacredly preserved by all who love the Lord Jesus; and without stopping, at this stage of our investigation, to ascertain all the precise features of this unity, which will hereafter appear; it is evident that the union inculcated by the apostle, is such, as is inconsistent with the divisions which he reprobates, and such divisions substantially are those of the present day, which are all based on some difference of doctrine, forms of government, or mode of worship among acknowledged Christians.

But the obligation of Christians to preserve the unity of the church, is evident from the *example of the apostles, of the apostolic and subsequent age.*

It would be superfluous to affirm, that no one of the apostles, or their fellow laborers established any sects in the christian church. The bare supposition of the contrary is absurd and revolting to every mind acquainted with the inspired record. Yet what ample ground was there for such a course, if it had been regarded lawful? There was difference of opinion among the apostles, and difference among the first Christians: but neither was regarded as a cause for schism or division in the church. Paul differed from Peter and disapproved of his conduct so much that (he says) "at Antioch I withstood him to the face, for he was to be blamed:"† yet neither of them dreamed of forming a sect for the defence and propagation of his distinctive views. Paul and Barnabas differed about their arrangements for missionary operations, and when the contention grew sharp, each took as fellow laborers those whom he preferred, and thus prosecuted the work; but it never entered into their minds to form different sects in the church. In the apostolic age there existed differences of *opinion* and *practice* between the Jewish and Gentile converts, far greater than those

* See also Eph. 4: 3—6. † Gal. 2: 11—14.

which divide some of the religious denominations of our land, (the former enjoining circumcision* and other ceremonial observances);† yet they did not divide the church into different sects under the guidance of the apostles. On the contrary the apostle enjoined mutual forbearance. "One man (says Paul) esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it—But why dost thou judge (condemn) thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought (despise) thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.‡ Nor did any schism actually arise from these differences till the apostles had gone to their rest, when in direct opposition to this advice, the Nazaraeans, in the reign of Adrian, separated from the body of Christians, who however strongly disapproved of their conduct. It is certain too that during several hundred years, there continued to be persons *in the church*, who exhibited a lingering attachment to the Mosaic ceremonial observances, yet they were not excluded nor advised to form themselves into a separate sect. The observance of the Lord's day or christian Sabbath was universal;§ but some Christians during several cen-

* Acts 15: 5.

† Gal. 4: 10: Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid, etc.

‡ Romans 14: 5—10.

§ On the subject of the primitive sanctification of the first day of the week as the christian Sabbath it may not be uninteresting to adduce the testimony of Justin Martyr, who was born three or four years after the death of the apostle John, in his Apology for the Christians, presented to Antoninus Pius, A. D. 150. He says: "On the day which is called *Sunday*, all whether dwelling in the towns, or in the villages, hold meetings, and the *memoirs* (*Ἀπομνημονεύματα*) of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read as much as the time will permit; then the reader closing, the person presiding, in a speech exhorts and excites to an imitation of those excellent examples; then we all rise and pour forth united prayers, and when we close our prayers, as was before said, bread is brought forward, and wine and water; and the presiding officer utters prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability (*ὅση δυνάμις ἀυτῷ*) and the people respond by saying *Amen*. A distribution and participation of the things blessed, takes place to each one present, and to those absent it is sent

turies continued also to observe the Jewish Sabbath as a sacred day. The time for the observance of Easter was another point of difference and even of warm controversy ; yet excepting some intolerant individuals neither party seriously thought of dividing the church or disowning their brethren on this ground.* Had these differences existed in our time, who can doubt not only that separate sects would have grown out of them but that their formation would be approved by Christians generally ? Nay is not this question decided by facts ? Is there not a sect of some extent in our land, the Seventh Day Baptists, who dif-

by the deacons. Those who are prosperous and willing, give what they choose, each according to his own pleasure ; and what is collected is deposited with the presiding officer, and he carefully relieves the orphans and widows, and those who from sickness or other causes are needy, and also those that are in prison, and the strangers that are residing with us, and in short all that have need of help. *We all commonly hold our assemblies on* SUNDAY, *because it is the first day on which God changed the darkness and matter and framed the world ; and Jesus Christ our Saviour, on the same day, arose from the dead.*" Murdock's Mos. I. p. 164—5.

* The testimony of Eusebius on this point is very satisfactory. He says (Book V. chap. 23,) "there was a considerable discussion raised about this time in consequence of a difference of opinion respecting the observance of the festival (of the Saviour's) passover."—After narrating the history of this discussion and the efforts of Victor, bishop of Rome, to break communion with those who differed from him, Eusebius quotes an extract from a letter written by Irenaeus to Victor to persuade him to peace. "And though (says Irenaeus to Victor) they (the earlier bishops) themselves did not keep it, they were not the less at peace with those from churches where it was kept, whenever they came to them.—*Neither at any time did they cast off any, merely for the sake of form.* But those very presbyters before thee, who did not observe it, sent the eucharist to those of churches who did. And when the blessed Polycarp went to Rome, in the time of Anicetus, and they had a little difference among themselves, about other matters also, they were immediately reconciled, not disputing much with one another on this head. For Anicetus could not persuade Polycarp not to observe it ; because he had always observed it with John, the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated.—Which things being so, *they communed together*, and in the church Anicetus yielded to Polycarp : they separated from each other in peace, all the church being at peace, both those that observe and those that did not observe, maintaining the peace." Euseb. Book V. chap. 24.

fer from other baptists only in regard to the time of observing the christian Sabbath; they believing that the seventh day continues to be the proper one under the New Testament dispensation, as it was under the Old? But in the apostolic churches it was different. There all who were regarded as Christians and lived in the same place, also belonged to the same church, and worshipped together, agreeing to differ in peace on minor points, and remembering that no Christian has a right to judge, that is to condemn his brother Christian on account of his conscientious difference of opinion. Each one was to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and prepare to stand with his brother before the judgment seat of Christ. Neither was to sit in judgment on the other, Christ was to judge both; and until his final award their differences were to be borne in love.

Let it be borne in mind, then, that in the apostolic age, when the church was governed by inspired servants of God, and for some time after, there was not in the whole christian world any such thing as different sects of acknowledged Christians. All who professed to be Christians, and resided in the same place, belonged to the same church. And if, as was probably the case in large cities, they met at different houses for worship, they nevertheless all regarded each other as members of the same church or congregation; they all frequently communed together, and the reason of different places for meeting, was not diversity of opinions among them, but because private houses in which they assembled, having had no churches till the third century,* could not contain them all. *Heretics* there were, who denied some essential doctrines of Christianity. These were excluded from the church in which they had resided, and were then disowned by all other christian churches. But different sects of Christians, acknowledging each other as Christians, yet separated on the ground of diversity of opinions, such as the different denominations of Protestants are, had no existence, and were utterly unknown in the apostolic age; nor was the *great body* of the church ever thus cut up, in her purest day during the earlier centuries. We read of the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church in Rome, the church in Smyrna, the church in Thyatira, the church in Phil-

* The houses for christian worship were erected during the reign of Alexander Severus between A. D. 222—235: yet Vater supposes them to have existed at the close of the 2d century.

adelphia, the church in Jerusalem, the church at Philippi, and in many other places ; but never of the *Pauline* church in Corinth, nor of the church that follows Apollos, nor of the church of Gentile converts, nor of the church of Jewish converts, nor of the church that retains the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, nor of the church that does not. In short *Christians* in those days were called Christians and nothing but Christians ; and one christian church was distinguished from another only by the name of the place in which it was located. This ought certainly to be a *solemn* fact to those, who have taken it for granted, that sectarian divisions of the church are right, that they were doing God service by their utmost efforts to perpetuate them, by inscribing on the tender and infant mind the lineaments of their denominational peculiarity. One thing does appear undeniable. If the sectarian form of Christianity be its best mode of development, the blessed Saviour himself—with reverence be it spoken !—the Saviour and his apostles failed to give it their injunction ; on the contrary, enjoined and practised directly the reverse ! ! The writer does not from these facts infer the obligation of Christians immediately to renounce their present organizations and all merge into one church. Difficulties now exist arising from honest diversity of views on church government, which did not exist in the apostolic age, and which render it impossible for persons thus differing to unite geographically ; but the essence of christian union may exist, and ought to be promoted immediately, as will be seen in a subsequent stage of this discussion. As to a union of all the churches of the land in one compact ecclesiastical system of judicature, such a one did not exist in the apostolic age, is undesirable, and dangerous.

But the importance of unity in the body of Christ, and the duty of promoting it is further demonstrated by the *baneful effects of sectarian divisions.*

Sectarian divisions, divisions on the ground of *difference*, tend to *destroy that community of interest, and sympathy of feeling* which the Saviour and his apostles so urgently inculcate. How fervently does our blessed Lord supplicate for the unity of all his followers ! " Neither pray I for these (the apostles) alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word ; that they may all be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee"*—that there may be among them that unity of counsel,

* John 17: 20, 21.

of feeling, of purpose, of action which exists between the Father and the Son. What can be more reasonable? If all his disciples, all who "believe in him through the word," are hereafter to inhabit the same heaven, to surround the same throne of God and the Lamb; would not the principle of sectarian divisions carry discord into those harmonious ranks, and mar their heavenly hallelujahs and grate upon the ears of angels and the Lamb! No! sectarianism is an acknowledged and — alas that it should be so—a cherished trait of the church on earth, which will never, never be admitted into heaven. And who can doubt that the nearer we can bring the church on earth to the character of the church in heaven, the more pleasing will she be to him that purchased her with his blood. Accordingly Paul informs us: "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the *same care one for another;** and if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." But, gracious Lord! is not directly the reverse of this but too frequently witnessed? Does not the great mass of the several religious denominations of our land, exhibit any thing else than "the same care," for the other members of Christ's body? If one denomination suffers, fails of success or meets with disgrace in some unworthy members, do not surrounding denominations rather at least tacitly and cheerfully acquiesce if not rejoice, hoping that thus more room will be made and facility offered for their own enlargement? We do not find that members of the same family thus cordially acquiesce or triumph in each others' misfortune or disgrace. If one brother is visited by any calamity, if he falls a victim to intemperance and bears about in his bloated face the ensign of his disgrace, do we find his brothers and sisters rejoice in it? Do they not rather sympathize, feel hurt themselves, and mourn over his downfall? Thus ought it to be among all who deserve the name of Christ. Thus would it be, if the community of interest in the Saviour's family had not been impaired by sectarian divisions which place several distinct religious families on the same ground, with separate pecuniary interests, with conflicting prejudices, with rival sectarian aims! In the apostolic age and for centuries after it, only one christian church occupied the same field, and *thus three fourths of the causes which originate contention among*

* 1 Cor. 12: 25.

modern Christians were avoided. These separate interests, will always create contention, rivalry and jealousies among fallible men, sanctified but in part, as long as they are not removed or their influence in some way counteracted. And, as they did not belong to the church constituted by the Saviour and his apostles, the solemn duty devolves on all Christians to inquire, how can this evil be remedied?

Again, sectarian divisions of the church *impede the impartial study of the sacred volume* by ministers and laymen. The doctrines believed by what are termed the orthodox churches, as well as their forms of government and worship, may be divided into two classes, those which are *undisputed* and held by all in common, and those which are *disputed* by some of them, and which distinguish the sects from each other. The sectarian principle builds a wall of defence around the peculiar opinions of each sect. It enlists all Christians in defence of the peculiarities of their denomination, and creates powerful motives of a self-interested and unholy character in vindication of these peculiarities, rather than of the grand truths of Christianity, which are essential to the salvation of all; motives which appeal to the pride of some, to the avarice of others, and to the ambition of a third class. Each member is taught by the very principles of his sinful nature to feel identified with the peculiar interests of his sect. His vanity is flattered by the supposed respectability of *his* sect, his ambition is at least tempted by the prospect of extended influence or distinction in the ministry or as a layman in the ecclesiastical councils of *his extensive and respectable* church, and his avarice is concerned in diminishing his own expenses by the increasing numbers of his fellow-members, or, if a minister, by the ample support which he may obtain. We would not insinuate that all Christians are influenced by these unamiable motives, nor that any true disciple of the Saviour is *mainly* actuated by them. But we fear that the majority of professors in the church, are more influenced by these secular considerations, than they are themselves aware. Accordingly, the peculiarities of sect acquire a factitious importance, are often inculcated with as much assiduity as the great and cardinal doctrines of the gospel. Endless and useless controversies about these points agitate the church, and disturb her peace. These peculiarities are instilled into the tender minds of children, and are often represented as involving the marrow of salvation. Prejudices are raised in their behalf. The tenets

of other denominations are often kept out of view, or stated in a manner but ill calculated for an impartial investigation of God's truth. The antipathies of the social circle are sometimes arrayed in opposition, and, may I say, sometimes in ridicule of other denominations; and even the gentler sex, sisters of her of Bethany, who, sitting at the Master's feet, imbibed the streams of his love; sisters of them, who, true to their affection,

> "Were last at the cross,
> And earliest at the grave,"

have hated that Saviour in the person of his followers, because they wore not the badge of their sect! have forgotten that their religion is love,—that charity, divine charity is the brightest ornament of their nature! Under such circumstances, doubts of the sectarian peculiarities inculcated, would expose the ingenuous youth who should avow them, to social inconveniences, to parental disapprobation, and rarely does he enjoy ample oportunity for impartial investigation, before adult age. The fact that almost invariably, young persons adopt and prefer the peculiar sectarian views of their parents, *is a demonstrative proof that their preference is not built on argument*, that the mode of religious education in the different churches is unfavorable to impartial investigation. The simple circumstance of parental belief, is assuredly no satisfactory proof of the creed which we adopt on account of it. For the same reason, we would have been Mohammedans, if born in Turkey, Papists in Italy, and worshippers of the Grand Lama in Thibet. And ministers of the gospel have still greater obstacles to surmount, as their disbelief of the peculiarities of their sect tarnishes their reputation with their associates, yea, not unfrequently excludes them from their pastoral charge, and their families from daily bread! Is it not evident, then, that the state of the christian church amongst us is unfavorable to the impartial study of the volume of divine truth?

Lastly, the principle of sectarian divisions *powerfully retards the spiritual conquests of Christianity over the world.* Who that knows aught of the divine life, can doubt, that in proportion as he permits pride, envy, jealousy, hatred to arise in his heart, the spirit of piety languishes, his graces decline and his sense of the divine presence is impaired? But sectarianism, by which in this discussion we generally mean the principle of divisions on the ground of difference, in nonessentials among those

who profess to regard each other as fellow Christians, sectarianism indubitably creates various conflicting interests, presents numerous occasions and temptations to envy, hatred, jealousy, slander, and creates an atmosphere around the Christian, in which the flame of piety cannot burn with lustre, and not unfrequently expires.

What observer of transpiring scenes can doubt, that the sectarian strife and animosity between the churches, deter many sinners from making religion the subject of their chief concern and from being converted to God? The Saviour prayed: That they all may be *one*, as thou Father art in me and I in thee; that they may also be one in us; *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" Here then, the Saviour himself informs us what influence unity among his followers was designed to effect; history tells that when surrounding heathen were constrained to say "see how these Christians love one another," the moral influence of their example was amazing: and who can doubt that inverse causes produce inverse effects.

How often does not the principle of sect, exclude the blessed Saviour from our villages and sparsely populated sections of country, in which united Christians might support the gospel; but cut up into jealous and discordant sects, and hating one another as though each believed a different Christ, all remain destitute of the stated means of grace! The occasional visits of ministers of different sects serve to confirm each party in its own predilections, and thus we often witness the melancholy spectacle of the Saviour excluded from such places by the dissensions of his professed friends, and sinners shut out from the sanctuary of God because saints cannot agree whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas shall minister unto them.

Nor is the principle of sect, less *unfriendly to the spread of the gospel in heathen lands.* By often stationing on the same ground at home, more men than are necessary, or can be supported, laborers are improperly withdrawn from the destitute portions of the field, which is "the world;" conflicting interests unavoidably arise among the ministers and churches thus crowded together; as all cannot long continue, a struggle for existence is carried on, more or less openly, and with different degrees of violence, until the failure of one or more drives them from the field, and makes room for the others. Nor is this conflict to be attributed so much to the want of piety in the parties, as to that actual conflict of interests which unavoidably results

from the influence of sects. But certainly every true Christian must deplore this state of things, and it is the writer's deliberate conviction, that one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup of ministerial sorrow, in many portions of our land, is this unholy and unhappy strife among brothers. In short it is a solemn and mournful truth, that sectarianism, the principle of sect, in a great measure changes the direction in which the energies of the church are applied, *transfers the seat of war from pagan to christian lands*, from the territory of Christ's enemies into the very family of his friends! In the beginning the church of the Redeemer at peace at home, directed all her surplus energies against the world around her and the world of Jews and Gentiles in foreign lands. The war was waged not by one portion of Christ's family against another, but emphatically and distinctly by the church against the world; such was the almighty force of the spiritual artillery wielded in this holy war, that in about three hundred years the little band of fishermen and tentmakers, fought their way to the utmost bounds of the Roman empire, and the banner of king Jesus, which was first unfurled in the valleys of Judea, was waving in triumph o'er the palace of the Caesars. But who can deny, that a large portion of the energies of christian sects is now expended in contending with each other, in building up walls of partition, in fortifying and defending those peculiar views by which they are kept asunder? The war is no longer a foreign, it is an intestine one. How large a portion of the *periodical literature* of the day is occupied in these family feuds, and consists of mere "doubtful disputations!" How large a portion of *ministerial talent* is placed in requisition to sustain this conflict? How many precious hours of time are thus applied? If all the time and talent and effort spent by the orthodox protestant churches in disputing with one another about the points of their difference, since the blessed Reformation, had been devoted to the projects of benevolent enterprise for the unconverted heathen world, who can calculate the progress that might have been made in evangelizing the gentile nations? Let every true disciple of the Saviour inquire, why do 600 millions of our fellow men languish in the shadows of death eighteen hundred years after the blessed gospel has been entrusted to christian hands for them? Four and fifty times has the entire population of the globe been swept into eternity, since the Saviour commissioned his disciples to publish the glad tidings to every crea-

ture. Who that has witnessed the prompt and overwhelming blessing of God on the efforts of the little band of Christians in Europe and America during the last thirty years; who that has seen a nation new-created almost in a day in the isles of the Pacific, and witnessed the standard of the cross erected in Africa, in Greece, in Turkey, in Hindoostan, in Ceylon, in China and many other places; and the glorious gospel of the Son of God translated into about one hundred and fifty languages; who that reflects on the millions of Bibles and the tens of millions of tracts which the united bands of liberal minded Christians have sent forth, can doubt that if the christian church had not become secularized by the unhappy union with the civil government under Constantine in the fourth century, the world had long ago been evangelized. Or if the Protestant church had not been split into so many parties by adopting the new, and we must believe unauthorized and pernicious doctrine, that they *had a* RIGHT *to adopt* for themselves and require of others as terms of communion, not only the fundamental doctrines which were required in the earlier centuries and were supposed sufficient for hundreds of years after the apostolic age, but also *as many additional and disputed points as they pleased*, thus dividing the body of Christ and creating internal dissensions; who that is acquainted with her history can doubt that greater, far greater, inroads would have been made into the dominions of the papal beast, and the glorious gospel of the Son of God, in the three centuries since the Reformation, have been carried to the ends of the earth.

Such then being the mournful consequences of that disunion against which the Saviour and his apostles so urgently admonished their followers, we feel with double force, that the church has been guilty of suicidal error, and that it is the solemn duty of every friend of Jesus, sincerely to inquire, Lord what wouldst thou have me do to heal the wounds of thy dismembered body!

CHAPTER II.

Deeply impressed with the conviction, that the blessed Saviour and his apostles have explicitly inhibited the division of the body of Christ into sectarian parties or factions, and fully persuaded that these divisions which exist among Protestants

generally, *at least with their present concomitants*, are highly prejudicial to the prosperity of Zion; let us approach the inquiry, *what is the more immediate and specific nature of that union, which characterized the primitive church*, and which it is obligatory on us to promote. As Protestants, who are ready to exclaim with Chillingworth, "*the Bible, the Bible*" is the only infallible source of our religion, we must naturally turn our eyes to its sacred pages; nor can we with safety rely on the practice of the church in any subsequent age, except in so far as it accords with apostolical example, or at least is a manifest development of principles clearly inculcated in the gospel. It is indeed worthy of remark, that we know next to nothing of the history of the christian church during more than a hundred years after its first establishment, except what is contained in the New Testament. This has often been regretted by men; but God has doubtless designedly enveloped that early period of her uninspired history in darkness, to compel us to rest entirely on his own infallible word, and to draw a clear and broad line of distinction between the authority of his inspired servants and that of the fathers of the church in after ages. The history and practice of the earlier ages when known, may afford an occasional illustration of our subject; yet, as protestants, we can acknowledge nothing as essential to the character of the church, or the duties of her members, which is not distinctly contained in the sacred volume.

It is certain, that *this union did not consist in any compact ecclesiastical organization of the entire church in a nation or empire under one supreme judicatory.*

Excepting an occasional interposition of apostolical authority, we are informed, that each church attended to its own affairs of government and discipline. Addressing the Corinthians,* Paul says "Do not *ye* judge (κρίνετε) them that are within? Therefore put *ye* away (ἐξάρατε) from among yourselves that wicked person;" manifestly attributing to the Corinthians the right to discipline and exclude an unworthy member from their body. The same right of supervision and discipline over her members, is attributed to each individual church by the Saviour himself:† "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone"— and eventually, if other means should fail, "*tell it to the church.*" Nor do we find in either of these cases any ultimate reference to a judicatory consisting

* 1 Cor. 5: 12. † Matt. 18: 15—17. See also 2 Cor. 2: 7.

of representatives from several, much less from all other christian churches. The phraseology* of the New Testament evidently implies, that each church was a distinct and complete church and a member of the body of Christ. It is however equally certain, that the New Testament presents in addition to several minor consultations, one example of a council or synod,† whose members were "the apostles, elders (that is, preachers), and brethren (that is, lay members)," and who assembled at Jerusalem for the purpose of settling a dispute touching the obligation of christian converts to observe "the law of Moses, etc." This synod was convened for a special purpose, was a *pro re nata* convention, and although it fully sanctions the call of such meetings as often as necessary, and justifies a provision for stated meetings if experience establishes their necessity and utility; yet it cannot with any plausibility be alleged, that the churches were then regularly united into such synods, or that such meetings were held regularly, at fixed times. Had they been of annual recurrence, who can doubt that some trace of the fact, or allusion to it, would be found in the Acts of the apostles or the epistles of Paul, which cover a period of about thirty years, and narrate or allude to the prominent events in the history of the church during that period? These facts urge upon our attention several important positions, the value of which will be more evident in the sequel. They are these:

a) *That the divine Head of the church has intrusted the great mass of the duties and privileges of his kingdom to the individual churches in their primary capacity.* Hence, though the churches ought to take counsel with each other, and for this purpose may have *stated meetings*, and constitute *regular synods*, they should not suffer any encroachments on their rights, nor permit too much of their business to be transacted by these *delegated* associations or presbyteries or synods. The neglect of this caution gradually robbed the churches of their rights and liberties in past ages, and fostered that incubus of Christianity, the papal hierarchy at Rome.

b) The *duty of fraternal consultation and union of counsel ought not to be neglected by the church in the discharge of her duties.* This principle evidently affords sanction to the various associations among the churches such as presbyteries, sy-

* Gal. 1: 2. 1 Cor. 16: 1. 2 Cor. 8: 1. 1 Thess. 2: 14. Acts. 9: 31. 15: 41.

† Acts xv.

nods, etc., for the purposes of mutual counsel, encouragement and coöperation in the performance of such duties as can best be accomplished by conjunction of means and efforts. Yet the history of past ages distinctly admonishes us to beware of the natural tendency to consolidation in church as well as State. There is doubtless danger of the concentration of power in the hands of ecclesiastical judicatories, which has in former ages, alas! been but too frequently abused to purposes of oppression and bloodshed, to the destruction of liberty of conscience, and the obstruction of the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom. It appears inexpedient for the churches to devolve on their delegated judicatories, such duties as they can perform as well in their primary capacity for another reason; because, when duties of various kinds are accumulated on any individual bodies, they must necessarily be less able to discharge them all with efficiency.

It is evident then, that in the apostolic age, the unity of the church did not consist in a compact conjunction of all her parts in an ecclesiastical judicatory. On the contrary, we have no accounts of any synods or councils after that age, until the latter part of the second century. Eusebius, the earliest author by whom the transactions of these councils are recorded, uses the following language, from which it is highly probable that such councils were nothing new, and that similar ones had been occasionally held during the previous seventy-five years which had intervened since the death of the last apostle:* "About this time appeared Novatus, a presbyter of the church of Rome, and a man elated with haughtiness against those (that had fall-

* Euseb. Book 6. chapter 43. *Ἐπειδὴ περὶ τῇ κατὰ τούτων ἀρθεὶς ὑπερηφανίᾳ Νοουάτος τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίας πρεσβύτερος, ὡς μηκέτ' οὔσης αὐτοῖς σωτηρίας ἐλπίδος, μηδ' εἰ πάντα τὰ εἰς ἐπιστροφὴν γνησίαν καὶ καθαρὰν ἐξομολόγησιν ἐπιτελοῖεν, ἰδίας αἱρέσεως τῶν κατὰ λογισμοῦ φυσίωσιν Καθαρούς ἑαυτοὺς ἀποφηνάντων, ἀρχηγὸς καθίσταται. ἐφ' ᾧ συνόδου μεγίστης ἐπὶ Ῥώμης συγκρωτηθείσης, ἑξήκοντα μὲν τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐπισκόπων, πλειόνων δε ἔτι μᾶλλον πρεσβυτέρων τε καὶ διακόνων, ἰδέως τε κατὰ τὰς λοιπὰς ἐπαρχίας τῶν κατὰ χώραν ποιμένων περὶ τοῦ πρακτέου διασκεψαμένων, δόγμα παρίσταται τοῖς πᾶσι· Τὸν μὲν Νοουάτον ἅμα τοῖς αὐτῷ συνεπαρθεῖσι, τούς τε συνευδοκεῖν τῇ μισαδέλφῳ καὶ ἀπανδρωποτάτῃ γνώμῃ τ' ανδρος προαιρομένους, ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡγεῖσθαι· τοὺς δὲ τῇ συμφορᾷ περιπεπτωκότας τῶν ἀδελφῶν, ἰᾶσθαι καὶ θεραπεύειν τοῖς τῆς μανοίας φαρμάκοις.* Edit. Zimmermann, Vol. I. p. 464, 465.

en), as if there were no room for them to hope for salvation, not even if they performed all things which belong to a genuine conversion, and a pure confession. He thus became the leader of the peculiar sect of those, who inflated by vain imaginations, called themselves Cathari. A very large council being held at Rome on this account, at which sixty bishops and a still greater number of presbyters and deacons were present, and the pastors of the remaining provinces, having according to their location deliberated separately what should be done; this decree was passed by all: That Novatus and those who so arrogantly united with him, and those that had chosen to adopt the uncharitable and most inhuman opinion of the man, should be ranked among such as are aliens from the church (excluded); but that such of the brethren, as had fallen during the calamity (persecution), should be treated and healed with the remedies of repentance."

This is the earliest account extant of any regular synod after the apostolic age. The absence of even the least intimation, that this assembly was any thing novel, confers a high degree of probability on the supposition that other similar meetings had occasionally occurred before. But it was not until the close of the second, or beginning of the third century, that these associations began to hold *regular* and *stated meetings*. This practice was first introduced in Greece, where the popular mind had been familiarized to such stated representative conventions, by the Amphictionic Council, and would naturally be inclined to transfer to the church, what had proved so acceptable in State.* Still the introduction of regular stated meetings had to encounter some opposition, for Tertullian, in the commencement of the third century, found it necessary to undertake their defence.† By the middle of the third century, however, these stated annual meetings had become very general.‡ Lay representatives

* See Neander's Kirchengeschichte, Vol. I. p. 322. Tertullian's words are, "Aguntur per *Graecias* illa *certis in locis* concilia, ex universis ecclesiis, per quae et altiora quaeque in commune tractantur et ipsa representatio totius nominis Christiani magna veneratione celebratur." De Jejuniis, c. 13.

† "Ista solennia, quibus tunc praesens patrocinatus est Sermo."—Tertullian.

‡ Cyprian. Ep. 40. and Firmilianus, (apud Cyprian. Ep. 75.) of Cappadocia: Necessario apud nos fit, ut per singulos annos seniores et praepositi in unum conveniamus, ad disponenda ea quae curae nostrae commissa sunt. Neander sup. cit. p. 322.

were at first admitted to these councils, as the "brethren" evidently had been in the apostolic age; but in process of time the bishops secured all this power to themselves.* These conventions were merely provincial, and embraced the churches of only one particular country or province. The entire christian church was not yet united by any supreme judicatory, having jurisdiction over all its parts, as eventually occurred under the papal hierarchy; but here we find for the first time a visible *union of all the acknowledged churches in a particular country under one ecclesiastical judicatory.* Such an extensive union in one judicatory, could not long fail to abridge freedom of investigation and liberty of conscience; if its powers were not purely those of an *advisory council*, and its advice confined to matters originating between the smaller judicatories and contemplating their relation to each other, and the progress of the church in general.

Again, the primitive unity of the church of Christ did not consist *in the organization of the whole church on earth under one visible head, such as the pope at Rome and the papal hierarchy.* We shall not here stop to prove, that the power given alike by the Saviour to all the apostles,† could not confer any peculiar authority on Peter: nor that Peter's having professed the doctrine of the Saviour's Messiahship, on which the Lord founded his church, does not prove that he founded it on Peter himself, making him and his successors his vicars upon earth. It is admitted by all Protestants that the pope is a creature as utterly unknown to the Bible as is the Grand Lama of the Tartars. It is well known, that the papal hierarchy is the gradual production of many centuries of corruption. In the third century the churches of a particular kingdom or province, were united by provincial synods; but it remained for the ardent African bishop Cyprian, after the middle of the third century, by an unhappy confusion of the visible with the invisible church, to develope in all its lineaments the theory of a neces-

* Neander sup. cit. p. 324.

† Matt. 16: 19: And I will give unto thee (Peter v. 18) the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Chap. 18: 1, 18: At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, etc.—He said—Verily I say unto you (disciples v. 1) whatsoever *ye* shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

sary visible union of the whole church on earth in one uniform external organization, under a definite apostolic succession of bishops, as the essential channel of the Spirit's influences on earth, transmitted by ordination.* It is only under the influence of this confused theory, that enlightened and good men could believe in the impossibility of salvation without the pales of their own visible church! That such a man as *Augustine*, could advance the following sentiments in the official epistle of the Synod assembled at Cirra in the year 412: Quisquis ab hac catholica ecclesia fuerit separatus, quantumlibet laudabiliter se vivere existimet, *hoc solo scelere*, quod a Christi unitate disjunctus est, non habebit vitam, *sed ira Dei manet super ipsum.* Quisquis autem in ecclesia bene vixerit, nihil ei praejudicant aliena peccata, *quia unusquisque in ea proprium onus portabit, et quicunque in ea corpus Christi manducaverit indigne, judicium sibi manducat et bibit*, quo satis ostendit apostolus, quia *non alteri* manducat *sed sibi*—communio malorum non maculat aliquem participatione sacramentorum, sed consensione factorum.† And in his own work "De fide et symbolo," written about twenty years earlier, he says:‡ "*We believe that the church is both holy and universal* (i. e. one). *The heretics, however, also denominate their congregations churches. But they, by entertaining false views concerning God, do violence to the christian faith: the schismatics on the other hand, although they agree with us in doctrine, forsake brotherly love by creating pernicious divisions.*"

It is easily perceptible, how this erroneous idea of the necessary visible combination of all the churches under one organiza-

* Neander's Kirchengeschichte, Vol. I. p. 330, 331.

† Fuch's Bibliothek der Kirchenversammlungen, Vol. III. p. 303. "Whoever separates himself from this universal church, however praiseworthy he may suppose his general conduct to be, shall not obtain life on account of *this crime alone*, that he is separated from the unity of Christ, but *the wrath of God abideth on him.* But whoever leads an exemplary life in the church, shall not be injured by the sins of others, because in it (the church) every one shall bear his own burden, and whoever eateth the body of Christ unworthily, shall eat and drink judgment to himself, by which the apostle clearly shows, that as he eats not for another, but for himself,—it is not the communion with the wicked in the reception of the sacraments, which contaminates any one, but his assent to their evil deeds."

‡ Koepler's Bibliothek der Kirchenvater, Vol. IV. p. 240.

tion, as the supposed exclusive channel of the divine influence and favor, would naturally tend to facilitate the ultimate adoption of the papal hierarchy; for here, and here alone, in the holy father, is to be found one visible, tangible head, adapted to the one universal visible church. That this opinion however, was not that of the apostles or of the apostolic age, is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of all writers in the earlier centuries. On this subject an interesting testimony has reached us in the Apostolic Canons, so called because the work professes to be and in the main is a collection of the principal customs and regulations for the government, discipline, etc. of the christian church during the first four centuries from the days of the apostles. It was most probably compiled shortly after the time of Augustine, in the middle of the fifth century, and clearly proves that the exclusive pretensions of the bishop of Rome were not acknowledged even at that time: It reads thus:

Canon 33. *The bishops of each nation should know the principal one among them, and regard him as their head* (*τους ἐπισκοπους ἑκαστου ἐθνους ἰδεναι χρη τον ἐν αὐτοις πρωτον, καὶ ἡγεισθαι αὐτον ὡς κεφαλην*) *and undertake nothing of importance without his advice. But each one should himself attend to what belongs to his own church and neighborhood. But even he ought to do nothing without consultation with others* (*ἀλλα μηδε ἐκεινος ἀνευ της παντων γνωμης ποιειτω τε*). *Herein consists the true unity (of the church), and such a course will tend to the glory of God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.*"

In short it is well known, that the bishop of Rome did not obtain even the title of *universal bishop* until, in the seventh century, "Boniface III. engaged Phocas, the Grecian Emperor, who waded to the throne through the blood of Mauritius, to take from the bishop of Constantinople the title of *oecumenical* or *universal bishop*, and to confer it on the Roman pontiff." His dignity as a *temporal prince* he did not receive till in the eighth century, when the usurper *Pepin*, in consideration of the aid afforded him by the pontiff in treasonably dethroning his predecessor, granted "the exarchate of Ravenna, and Pentapolis" to the Roman pontiff, and his successors in the pretended apostolic see of St. Peter. There can therefore be no question as to the truth of our position, that the primitive church was not united under one visible head, such as the pope and papal hierarchy.

Finally, *it is certain that the unity of the primitive church did not consist in absolute unanimity in religious sentiments.* This assertion may appear startling to some. "What!" (some of my readers may be ready to exclaim) "was there any diversity of opinion in the primitive church, under apostolic guidance? we have always supposed, that there existed a perfect agreement on all points among the first Christians, and that the proper method to restore the primitive purity of the church is to insist on agreement on all points from those who could unite with us as a church of Christ." This opinion has also prevailed for many centuries, and has been the prolific mother of extensive and incalculable evils in the christian church. It has led to the persecution and death of millions of our fellow men under the papal dominion, it has caused endless divisions and envyings and strife in the Protestant churches.

Its fallacy we think appears from the following considerations:

It is rendered highly probable by *the fact that the Scriptures contain no provision to* PRESERVE *absolute unity of sentiment* on all points of religious doctrines and worship if it ever had existed. Many points of doctrine and forms which men at present regard as important, are not decided at all in the sacred volume. Other points are inculcated in indefinite language, which admits of several constructions. The diversity of views derived from these records by the several religious denominations of equal piety, of equal talent and equal sincerity, indisputably establishes the fact, that they do not contain provision for absolute unity of sentiment among Christians. Now as all admit the substantial similarity of the oral instructions of the apostles to the primitive Christians, and their written instructions in the sacred volume, it follows that the impressions made on an audience of primitive Christians would be the same; except perhaps in the case of a few individuals who might have opportunity of personal interviews and more minute inquiry with the apostles. With the greatest facility the Author of our holy religion could have made such provision. He did by inspiration endow his apostles with every requisite qualification not naturally possessed by them, and led them into all necessary truth. Now as they have left many points of doctrine and forms of worship and government undecided, and as they do not express with philosophical precision the doctrines which they do teach, it is a just inference that one reason why these minor differences are not obviated in the church, and all truly pious, able and faithful Christians do

not agree on all points is, that the sacred volume has not made provision for such absolute unanimity. Let no one here assert that human language is so deficient, and the education and habits of men so diverse, that they will impose different constructions on any composition. The contrary is the case. Even uninspired men of well disciplined mind, have often expressed their views on these topics in language which is not misunderstood. Is there any doubt, in any well informed mind, as to the opinions taught on the several topics which separate the principal protestant churches, by Calvin in his Institutes, or by Whitby on the Five Points? In regard to the meaning of some protestant creeds there has been, it is true, not a little controversy. But the framers of these Confessions designedly used language somewhat generic and indefinite, in order that persons of not entirely accordant sentiments might sign them, and modern disputants of each party have endeavored to prove these creeds favorable only to their own views. Or, persons charged with deviation from an adopted creed, and believing themselves to adhere to its general tenor, are naturally inclined to interpret its indefinite or generic terms in favor of their own views, whilst their opponents, pursuing a contrary course, strain those same expressions as far as possible in a different direction. But it will not be denied, that it would be no difficult task for any well educated divine to make, in a single octavo page, such a statement of doctrines, as would distinguish any one of the prominent protestant denominations from all others,—to frame a creed, concerning whose real meaning, there would be no difference of opinion. Therefore, as the written instructions of the apostles and other inspired writers, do not contain provision to produce absolute unanimity among the pious since the apostolic age, and as these very written instructions were addressed to the primitive Christians, and were the only inspired instructions which many of them possessed; there can be but little doubt, that if a dozen of those Christians had been required to state their views on all the points of diversity between protestant Christians, it would have been found, that the impressions then made by these books, were not more definite than those which they now produce on the same points of doctrine. And as the oral teaching of the apostles was doubtless substantially the same as their recorded instructions; the impression made by them on the entire primitive church was probably the same so far as doctrines are concerned; whilst it is evident, that in re-

gard to the apostles' mode of worship and church government, there could have been but one opinion, among those who had witnessed them with their own eyes. Again, the fact that the Bible is not constituted so as to obviate this diversity of sentiment, when it might easily have been so formed by the hand of inspiration, is *conclusive proof that the points of diversity among real and enlightened Christians, are not and cannot be of essential importance.*

But the existence of *diversity of opinion in the apostolic churches is placed beyond all possible doubt by the express declaration of the apostle Paul,* who, knowing that such differences would continue to exist in after ages, has also prescribed regulations for our conduct towards those who may differ from us: * "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye but not (in order) to (engage in) disputations with him about doubtful matters. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.—One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.—But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

Here then we have the express testimony of the apostle, that differences of opinion did exist among the primitive Christians at Rome in reference to at least two points, the diversity of meats and the question whether all days should be regarded as equally holy, or whether the Jewish distinction of days should be observed by Christians. Both the points of difference are moreover of such a character, relating to matters of fact, tangible and visible in their nature, that any regulation which the apostle may have previously given, Christians would be aided in comprehending, by observing the example and practice of the apostles themselves. They were matters too concerning

* Rom. 14: 1—13.

one of which he had seven years before expressed his opinion in pretty evident language to the Galatian brethren, when he said:* "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days and months and times and years; I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." And how does the apostle settle this dispute among the Romans? How does he introduce perfect unity of sentiment among them on this point of christian duty? It is worthy of special observation, that he does not even attempt to induce them all to think alike; but enjoins on each one obedience to the dictates of his own conscience, and on all abstinence from every attempt to condemn or censure their brethren for honest difference of opinion; he enjoins on all mutual forbearance and brotherly unity! Be it remembered too, that this point of difference among the primitive Christians,† is one, on which the declarations of the New Testament have produced pretty general unanimity among modern protestant Christians, whilst it is a matter of historical notoriety that the diversity on this very topic was not entirely banished from the primitive church a century after all the books of the New Testament which touch on the subject had been written.

Again, look at the church of Corinth itself, whose attempts at division Paul so decidedly censured. The apostle explicitly informs us, that some members of the Corinthian church *denied the resurrection of the body.* As to the reason of their denial, whether the leaven of the Sadducees had infected them, or whether, as Greeks, they were misled by their philosophy falsely so called, and with Celsus despised the doctrine as "the hope of worms," the ελπις σκωληκων, we know not; but for the fact Paul is our authority. "How," he remarks, "say *some among you,* that there is no resurrection of the dead?" He then advances several arguments in favor of the doctrine, answers the philosophical objections to it, and proves to them the fallacy of their opinion on this subject; but not the least intimation is given, that those who believe in the resurrection should separate from those who denied it. This doctrine had

* Gal. 4: 10.

† According to the earliest records extant the difference in the time of celebrating Easter is referred to the apostles themselves. See Dr. Murdock's Mosheim I. 102, 103. 164.

not, it is true, been so amply unfolded by any inspired writer as is done by Paul in his epistle to these very men, and we are unable to perceive how any believer in the Scriptures could now deny this doctrine. Yet the fact of the resurrection, to say nothing of the Old Testament, had been distinctly affirmed by the Saviour and his apostles, as must have been known to the Corinthians.

It is therefore absolutely certain that the bond of primitive union, was not that of perfect unity of sentiment on religious subjects even in the days of the apostles themselves. That differences on other topics, especially on minor points of abstract doctrine, also existed, is evident from the fact expressly declared, that some even went so far as to fall into fundamental doctrinal error, such as to "deny the Lord that bought them." Now every rational man will admit, that the progress of the human mind in the fluctuation of opinions is gradual, and that where the extremes occurred the intermediate gradations must have existed. It seems almost impossible for a mind elevated but a single grade above savageism, when for example the doctrine was taught that Christ made an atonement for sinners, not to advert to the persons for whom this atonement was made, and to understand the declarations of the gospel as teaching, that it was made for somebody, either for all men or a portion of mankind. But although we have no reason to imagine that the same books which are differently understood by modern Christians, could have produced absolute unity of opinion among them; we find no certain traces of *dissension* about points of *abstract* doctrine. As these abstract differences had no perceptible influence on christian practice, the primitive Christians probably did not even compare their views on many points of modern controversy, and may have differed on some minor topics without knowing it. Yet on some points they differed and discussed; but Paul dissuades them from indulging in "doubtful disputations."*

Having thus, as we suppose, satisfactorily ascertained, that the bond of union among the apostolic churches did *not consist in a compact ecclesiastical organization of the entire church in any nation or country under one supreme judicatory;* nor in the

* Rom. 14: 1: Him that is weak in the faith (who has not fully apprehended all the christian doctrines) receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations (*μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν*, without deciding on his scruples).

organization of the whole church on earth under one visible head, such as the pope and papal hierarchy; and finally, that it did *not consist in absolute unanimity of religious sentiment;* it remains for us to inquire into the positive elements which did compose it—whilst each congregation transacted its ordinary business of government and discipline for itself, and constituted as it were one member of the body of Christ, what were the ties by which these several members were united together, and by which the spirit of brotherly love was preserved among them?

We here presuppose the prevalence among the primitive Christians of that unity of spirit, which gave life and value to all the external forms of union. Without this, the church, even if externally bound together by a bond of iron, would be a lifeless trunk destitute of that pervading spirit that gives interest and animation to the whole. But on this subject we are not permitted to cherish a moment's doubt. We are expressly told by Luke in his Acts of the Apostles:* "*And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul.*" Then it was that the disciples continued "with one accord, breaking bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and with singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with the people."† It is this unity of spirit, this undissembled brotherly love, cherished in their bosoms and manifested in their conduct towards each other, which invested the example of the primitive church with such an omnipotence of moral power, and extorted from the surrounding heathen themselves the exclamation: "See how these Christians love one another." But our object at this time is to ascertain, what were the principal external means of manifesting and perpetuating this unity of spirit among the primitive christian churches.

I. The first means of union was *entire unity of name;* that is, the careful avoidance of all names, which implied difference or division. In the apostolic age, the followers of the Redeemer were technically called *Christians*, and only Christians. The churches in different places were distinguished by *geographical* designations, and by these alone. We read of the church at Jerusalem, the church at Corinth, the church at Rome, etc. but not of the Pauline or Apolline or Cephine church, nor of a church named after any other person but him, who bought

* Acts 4: 32. † Acts 2: 46.

the church—not a part of the church, but the *whole* church, with his blood. Let it not be supposed, that this is an unimportant feature of christian union. Paul the apostle did not thus regard it, when he so promptly met and repelled the attempt of those at Corinth, who adopted such sectarian names, saying "I am of Paul and I am of Apollas and I am of Cephas." He expressly forbade their adoption of such names, declaring that by so doing they implied, that their adopted leaders had died for them, and that they had been baptized into *their* names. The sentiments of the church, during the earlier centuries, may be learned from the declaration of Lactantius at the commencement of the fourth century: "The Montanists, Novatians, Valentians—or whatever else they may call themselves, have ceased to be Christians, because they have renounced the *name* of Christians, and called themselves by the names of men." (Instit. div. l. IV. c. 30). This estimate of the importance of *unity of name*, is doubtless overwrought; yet the influence of different names is far from being unimportant at present. "Names are things" said that distinguished and laborious servant of Christ, the Rev. Dr. A. Green, when on assuming the editorial chair of "The *Presbyterian* Magazine," he changed its title to *Christian* Advocate. His reasons for this alteration he thus assigns: "We usually form some judgment of a publication from its title; and indeed, it is for this very purpose that a title is given. Now on hearing of a *Presbyterian* Magazine, some, it appears, have set it down at once as a sectarian work, of which the main and ultimate design would be to diffuse and defend the doctrines and opinions which are *peculiar* to the Presbyterians, and on this account they have resolved to give it no encouragement." What is here acknowledged of the term Presbyterian, is equally true of every other sectarian name of christian churches. Whilst it is conceded that the substitution of geographical for sectarian names could not remove the whole difficulty; it is equally certain that it would *not be without its influence*. Even Celsus, the bitter foe of Christians, when charging on them as criminal their differences on nonessentials which prevailed among them in his day, was compelled to acknowledge as one bond of union among them, their *unity of name*. Thousands of enlightened, true Christians of different denominations differ only in name. And thousands there are among the more ignorant, who exhibit much acerbity against other sects and prepossessions for their own, and yet

are ignorant of all the points of distinction between them except the *name*.

The *second* bond of union among the primitive churches, was *unity of opinion on all fundamental doctrines, that is, the profession of a creed of fundamentals.* That the primitive Christians, notwithstanding their minor differences, did agree on all fundamental doctrines, is evident, because they possessed either the oral instruction of the apostles, or the same sacred records of them which have produced such unity in fundamentals among modern Christians. It is presupposed by the apostle's injunction "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints;" for, before they could contend for the faith, they must have a general understanding among them at least as to what the fundamentals of that faith are, for they were also commanded to abstain from "doubtful disputations," and not "to judge" their brethren for minor differences. It is finally proved by the fact, that they required of every candidate for baptism a profession of his creed of faith prior to the administration of the ordinance: "*If thou believest*" (said Philip to the eunuch) "*with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*"* The custom of requiring of all applicants for baptism a confession of their faith in the fundamentals of the gospel, seems to have been general throughout the whole church. For among the earliest documents of christian antiquity that have reached us, there is one which by the universal testimony of the christian fathers, is an authentic collection of the several points of doctrine to which this assent was required from the days of the apostles, we mean the so called *Apostles' Creed.* This creed is highly interesting and important, especially to modern Christians; first, because it shows what the primitive church universally understood the Scriptures to teach; and secondly, because it incontestibly establishes the fact, that the primitive church, when guided by the inspired apostles, and soon after, *deemed it lawful to require unanimity only in fundamental doctrines* in order to the unity of the church. This creed, let it further be remembered, was the only one which was adopted in the church of Christ until the fourth century, in which the council of Nice adopted one of the same import, and of but little greater length. Some small variations are found in

* Acts 8: 37. See also Rom. 12: 6. 2 Tim. 1: 14. Jude v. 3.

the earliest copies, but substantially it reads thus :* *I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth :*

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.—The third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic or universal church ; the communion of saints ; the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

To this, some copies add the sentence "descended into hades, or the place of departed spirits ;" but it was not found in

* The earliest copies of this symbol are in the Latin language. There are several various readings extant, which probably originated in different Western churches, which used this symbol. We shall give the symbol, together with the various readings in parentheses, so that the reader may at one glance see the whole, and also perceive that even with the added variations, it was still a creed which all orthodox Protestants can subscribe :

I. Credo in (unum) Deum, Patrem omnipotentem creatorem coeli et terrae *("creatorem coeli et terrae"* defuit in orient. et Rom. antiquo symbolo : in Aquilejensi autem positum erat, "*invisibilem et impassibilem.")*

II. Et in Jesum Christum filium ejus unicum, Dominum nostrum, ("et in *unum* Dominum nostrum, Jesum Christum, filium ejus *unigenitum,*" ita addendo et transponendo legit olim Ecclesia orientalis.) Qui conceptus est de Spiritu sancto ; natus ex Maria virgine ("qui natus est de Spiritu sancto ex Maria virgine" communis olim lectio erat.) Passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus et sepultus, descendit ad inferna ; ("crucifixus sub Pontio Pilato et sepultus" simpliciter olim multi legebant ; Aquilejense tandem symbolum addidit "descendit ad inferna ;" ex quo symbolo Sec. VI. Romana ecclesia hanc appendicem suo symbolo insernit) tertia die resurrexit a mortuis ; ascendit ad coelos ; sedet ad dextram Dei Patris omnipotentis. Inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos.

III. Credo in spiritum sanctum ("*et* in spiritum sanctum" olim), Sanctam ("*unam*" orientales addiderunt) Ecclesiam Catholicam ; sanctorum communionem, ("catholicam, ex sanctorum communionem" ex Niceno forsan symbolo insertum, olim defuit), Remissionem peccatorum ; Carnis (*hujus* symb. Aquilej. addidit) resurrectionem ; et vitam aeternam. Amen. ("vitam aeternam" in plerisque olim symbolis desiderabatur). See Clemm's Einleitung in die Religion und Theologie, Vol. IV. p. 459.

the creed of the Latin churches, until the sixth century. Here then we have the series of doctrines, the belief of which was the bond of union in the church of Christ during three hundred years ; and was regarded as sufficient for ecclesiastical union, without any inquiry as to differences on minor points. All who adopted these doctrines and adorned them by a consistent walk, were regarded as worthy members of the one, universal church of Christ, were every where admitted to sacramental communion by right. All professing these doctrines, and residing in the same place, were united into one church, and worshipped together ; and different christian churches, occupying the same geographical ground, and distinguished from each other by differences concerning doctrines not contained in this creed, had no existence in the church for several centuries : were totally unknown during the golden age of Christianity. To this summary of doctrine some few articles were added in after ages by different councils, to meet several fundamental heresies which arose. But the additions are few, and generally composed with studious brevity. In reference to these doctrines, which he had just before expressed in his own language, Irenaeus, a strenuous defender of the faith against various heretics, a disciple of Polycarp, the friend of the apostle John, makes the following remarks *(which are equally applicable to the several orthodox Protestant churches* though they are so lamentably divided) : " This faith the church has received, and though dispersed over the whole world, assiduously preserves as if she inhabited a single house ; and believes in these things as having but one heart and one soul : and with perfect harmony proclaims, teaches, hands down these things, as though she had but one mouth. For though there are various and dissimilar languages in the world ; yet the power of the faith transmitted is one and the same. Neither the churches in *Germany*, nor in *Iberia*, (Spain), nor among the *Celtae* (in France), nor in the East, nor in Egypt, nor in Lybia, nor in the middle regions of the world (Jerusalem and the adjacent districts) believe or teach any other doctrines. But as the sun is one and the same throughout the whole ; so the preaching of the truth shines every where, and enlightens all men, who are willing to come to a knowledge of truth. Nor will the most powerful in speech among the governors of the churches say any thing more than these ; (for no one can be above his master) ; nor the most feeble any thing less. For as there is but one faith, he that is

able to speak much cannot enlarge ; nor he who can say little diminish it."*

In the earlier part of the fourth century (A. D. 325) the Nicene Creed was adopted in order to exclude the Arians from the church. It is little else than a repetition of the apostles' creed, with several clauses referring to the error of the Arians. The synod of Constantinople about fifty-six years afterwards (A. D. 381) still further enlarged this summary, by the addition of several clauses concerning the worship of the Holy Spirit, the validity of baptism, etc. This creed as enlarged by the synod of Constantinople, is contained in the symbols of the Lutheran church in Europe, and also in the Prayer Book of our Protestant Episcopal brethren in this country. It reads thus :

" I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

" And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds ; God of God, Light of Light, true God of the true God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made ; who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead ; whose kingdom shall have no end.

" And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. And I believe in one catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins ; and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.† "

* Irenaeus adv. haereses, L. I. c. 3. p. 46. ed. Grabe : and Mason's Plea, p. 41.

† The following is the Greek original of the *Nicene* Creed, as preserved in the History of Socrates, L. I. c. 8. By a comparison of it with the above version, the reader may distinguish the additions made by the council of Constantinople.

Πιστευομεν εἰς ἑνα Θεον, πατερα παντοκρατορα, παντων ὁρατων τε και

These symbols, let it be remembered, we adduce not for the purpose of proving the doctrines contained in them, (a point to be established only by the Scriptures) but in order to establish two facts highly important to our inquiry, viz. 1) that the early Christians did require assent to certain articles of christian faith ;) and 2) that these articles to which assent was required, were only fundamental doctrines and facts of the christian religion.

It is thus evident that *unity of opinion on fundamental doctrines and on those alone*, constituted one of the principal bonds of union among churches in the early ages. It is moreover clear, as the several orthodox protestant churches of our land cordially embrace all the doctrines enumerated by Irenaeus and the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds, that they ought not on the principles of primitive Christianity, to be cut up into different sects, but should be united into one universal church. But instead of all the Protestant churches embracing one common creed of fundamentals, and holding it up to the view of the world as the symbol of their unity in the faith as Christians did in the earlier ages at every case of baptism ; the use of different creeds naturally inculcates the idea of doctrinal difference in-

αορατων ποιητην. Και εἰς ἑνα Κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον, τον υἱον του Θεου, γεννηθεντα ἐκ του Πατρος μονογενη, τουτ ἐστιν ἐκ της οὐσιας του Πατρος, Θεον ἐκ Θεου και φως ἐκ φωτος, Θεον ἀληθινον ἐκ Θεου ἀληθινου, γεννηθεντα οὐ ποιηθεντα, ὁμοουσιον τῳ πατρι, δι οὗ τα παντα ἐγενετο, τα τε ἐν τω οὐρανω, και τα ἐν τη γη, δι ἡμας ἀνθρωπους, και δια την ἡμετεραν σωτηριαν κατελθοντα και σαρκωθεντα και ενανθρωπησαντα παθοντα και ἀνασταντα τη τριτη ἡμερα, ἀνελθοντα εἰς τους οὐρανους, ἐρχομενον κριναι ζωντας και νεκρους. Και εἰς το ἁγιον πνευμα. The above was the original form of the creed, and contains all that catechumens were required to repeat as their confession. The following clause was however added by the Nicene fathers, and all ministers were required also to subscribe to it : *Τους δε λεγοντας ὁτι ἠν ποτε ὁτι οὐκ ἠν, και πρην γεννηθηναι οὐκ ην, και ὁτι ἐξ οὐκ ὀντων εγενετο, ἠ ἐξ ἑτερας υποστασεως ἠ ουσιας φασκοντες εἰναι, ἠ κτιστον, ἠ τρεπτον, ἠ ἀλλοιωτον τον υἱον του Θεου, αναθεματιζει ἡ ἁγια καθολικη και αποστολικη εκκλησια,* i. e. The holy, catholic and apostolic church condemns (the opinion of) those who say, that there was a time when the Son of God did not exist, and that before he was begotten he did not exist, and that he was made out of things that were not, or who say that he is of some other hypostasis or substance, or that he was created, or that he is changeable or subject to variation. See Clemm's Einleitung in Religion und Theologie, Vol. IV. p. 464–5.

stead of unity ; and their great length, by bringing to light all the minor differences, and ranking them indiscriminately with the fundamentals, and making them the basis of separate churches, inevitably must tend to throw into the shade our real fundamental union and perpetuate the schisms in the body of Christ.

The *third* bond of union among the primitive Christians, *was the mutual acknowledgement of each other's acts of discipline.* If an individual was excommunicated or under censure in one church, he could not obtain admission into any other. As a security against imposition, it was customary for persons in good standing, when travelling into strange places, to take letters of introduction, or certificates of their good standing from the pastor. When any one was destitute of such certificate, his application for church privileges was always rejected. To these letters Paul refers, and expresses the opinion, that he would need no such document among the Corinthians, as he was well known to them : " Need we, as some others, *epistles of commendation* to you, or letters of commendation from you ? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." * This same custom was prescribed in the church for centuries, and numerous synodical decrees were enacted for its confirmation. In the apostolic Canons or Regulations we find the following :

Canon 12. *Ει τις κληρικος ἠ λαικος ἀφωρισμενος, ἠτοι ἀδεκτος, ἀπελθων εἰς ἑτερα πολει, δεχθη ἀνευ γραμματως συστατικων, ἀφοριζεσθω και ὁ δεξαμενος και ὁ δεχθεις.*" † That this regulation prevailed from the very days of the apostles, is highly probable, because, as we have seen, Paul himself makes mention of letters of this nature. At the oecumenical or general council held at Nice, in the year A. D. 325, at which were present ministers from the greater part of the christian world, the following resolution, or canon, was adopted :

Resolution or Canon 5. *In regard to those persons, whether clergymen or laymen, who have been excommunicated by a bishop, the existing rule is to be retained, namely, that they*

* 2 Cor. 3: 1—4.

† *If any excommunicated clergyman, or a layman who has been excommunicated, or denied admission* (as member of the church), *go to another city and is received without letters of recommendation, both he who receives him, and the person thus received shall be excommunicated.*

shall not be restored by any other than by the one who excommunicated them. Inquiry ought however to be instituted, whether their expulsion from the church was not occasioned by a contentious spirit or some other mean or hostile passion. And in order that this may be properly done, there shall annually be two synods held in each province, and at these meetings of the bishops, suitable examinations shall be instituted, in order that every person may see the justice of the excommunication of those who transgressed against (the regulations of) *the bishop, until the assemblage of bishops shall, if they see fit, pronounce a milder sentence. One of those synodical meetings shall be held before the spring fast, the other in the fall.* *

At the council or synod of Antioch, held in A. D. 341, sixteen years after that at Nice, a resolution of just the same import was passed:

Resolution 6. *If any person has been excommunicated by his bishop, he shall not be restored by any one else than that bishop himself, unless his case has been examined by the council or synod, and a milder sentence been obtained. This regulation shall be applicable alike to laymen, presbyters, deacons, and all the clergy.*†

From these testimonies it is abundantly evident, that the churches in the earlier centuries fully acknowledged the disciplinarian acts of each other: nor is it difficult to perceive the salutary influence which would result from such mutual marks of confidence. Carried to a reasonable extent, they would give an efficacy to church discipline, which it has almost entirely lost in modern times. This regulation would cherish brotherly love between the churches, and tend to give visibility to their union.

The *fourth bond of union among the primitive Christians was sacramental and ministerial communion.* This feature is one of very extensive application and most salutary influence on the different portions of the christian church. The apostle Paul may be regarded as inculcating it in his declaration to the Christians at Corinth; "*For we being many, are one bread and one body* (that is, you at Corinth, I and my fellow-Christians here at Ephesus, from the midst of whom I am addressing you, are

* Fuch's Bibliothek der Kirchenversammlungen, Vol. I. p. 394.

† Ibid. Vol. II. p. 62.

one body); *for we are all partakers of that one bread.*"* Accordingly we find, that in the earliest period to which the records of christian antiquity extend, every church received to communion as fully as its own members, the members and ministers of every other acknowledged christian church on earth, upon evidence of their good standing. Strangers coming from other churches were required to present letters or certificates of their standing; and all Christians, whether clergy or laymen, regarded it as a duty to commune with the members of any other church, at which they happened to be present. It was a common custom for Christians in the earlier centuries, when travelling, to take such certificates of membership with them; and when stopping in a city or town, they sought out the Christians living in it, and received from them every mark of attention and friendship. These letters were termed *literae formatae* or *γραμματα τετυπωμενα*, as they were of a particular form to prevent counterfeits; they were sometimes denominated *epistolae communicatoriae*, or *γραμματα κοινωνικα*, letters of ecclesiastical communion or fellowship.†

The broad principle of scriptural *christian communion* extends indiscriminately to all whom we regard as true disciples of Christ. Thus it is laid down by Peter in his vindication, when censured for communing with Gentile converts: "thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them." ‡ His argument is thus summed up, after he had detailed the facts on which it rested; "*Forasmuch as God gave them the like gift, as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*"

It is equally certain that *ministerial* communion and official acknowledgement pervaded the church in her primitive ages. The regulations made by different synods or councils to prevent the abuse of this privilege incontestibly establish its existence. But even in the apostolic canons we find the following:

Canon 32. *Μηδενα των ξενων ἐπισκοπων ἢ πρεσβυτερων ἢ διακονων ἀνευ συστατικων προσδεχεσθαι· και ἐπιφερομενων αὐτων ἀνακρινεσθωσαν· και ἡμεν ὡσι κηρυκες της εὐσεβειας προσδεχεσθωσαν· εἰ δε μηγε, την χρειαν αὐτοις ἐπιχορηγησαντες,*

* 1 Cor. 10: 17.

† Neander's Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche, Vol. I. p. 320.

‡ Acts 12: 3, 17.

*εἰς κοινωνιαν αὐτους μη προσδεξεσθε· πολλα γαρ κατα συναρπαγην γινεται.**

At the synod of Carthage, held A. D. 348 or 349, it was resolved that "*no one shall receive a minister without letters from his bishop.*"†

If furnished with suitable testimonials a minister in one part of the church was acknowledged as such in every other, and if present at public worship was ordinarily invited to take part in conducting the services.

The tendency which such *free sacramental intercommunion* as opportunity offers with all over the whole earth who present credible evidence of genuine discipleship, cannot readily be calculated. The views and principles and feelings which it presupposes, constitute important elements of the millennial union of the future church. God grant their speedy dissemination over the church universal!

The *fifth* means by which unity was promoted and preserved among the primitive Christians, was *occasional epistolary communication*. Of this fact we have abundant proof in the epistles of Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius and Barnabas, who are termed apostolic fathers, because they lived partly in the apostolic age. Some of these epistles are doubtless spurious and all corrupted, yet enough remains to answer the purpose for which we adduce them to show that they were letters written to different churches to promote doctrinal and ecclesiastical union among them. The age immediately subsequent to the apostles furnishes numerous instances of such epistolary communion of the churches. From Eusebius we learn that Dionysius of Corinth about the year A. D. 160, sent abroad numerous epistles of this kind. "And first (says Eusebius*) we must speak

* "Let no one receive strange (foreign) bishops or presbyters or deacons without letters of recommendation; and the letters that are brought must be examined. If they prove to be pious preachers (preachers of piety) let them be received: but if they do not; their immediate necessities should be supplied, but they must not be received into communion. For many instances of fraud have occurred in this matter." Koepler's Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, Vol. IV. p. 240.

† Fuch's Bibliothek der Kirchenversammlungen, Vol. III. p. 35.

* Eusebius, IV. ch. 23. *Καὶ πρῶτον γε περὶ Διονυσίου φατέον· ὅτι τε τῆς ἐν Κορίνθῳ παροικίας τὸν τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἐγκεχείριστο θρόνον, καὶ ὡς τῆς ἐνθέου φιλοπονίας οὐ μόνον τοῖς ὑπ' αὐτὸν, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ τοῖς*

of Dionysius, who was appointed over the church at Corinth, and imparted freely not only to his own people, but to others abroad also, the blessings of his divine labors. But he was most useful to all in the general epistles which he addressed to the churches. One of them is addressed to the Lacedaemonians, and contains *instructions in the true religion, and inculcates peace and unity:* one also to the Athenians, exciting them to the faith and the life prescribed by the gospel, from which he shows that they had swerved, so that they had nearly fallen from the truth since the martyrdom of Publius, their leader (bishop) which happened in the persecutions of those times. The necessity of such letters as means of christian instruction, is at present superseded by the universal dissemination of the holy Scriptures; yet as bonds of christian union, they may still be occasionally resorted to with the happiest results, especially between Christians of distant countries as a substitute for personal intercourse. We cannot but commend the epistle of the venerable Dr. Planck of Germany, to the General Synod of the Lutheran Church in this country, as also the epistles of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches of the United States to the Christians of the same denomination in Europe. Still, all these epistles bear on their front the badge of schism; for they were addressed by particular sects of Christians, not to Christians of another country generally, but only to Christians of the same sect. They are epistles from followers of Paul and Apollos in one land, to disciples of the same leaders in another. So completely has sectarianism separated the several denominations, that by many it is regarded as immodest to address any others than those of their own sect. Instead of that community of interest between all the members of Christ's body, which the apostle inculcates, "so that all the members should have the same care one for another, and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;"* sectarianism has taught each

ἐπι τῆς ἀλλοδαπῆς ἀφθόνως ἐκοινώνει· χρησίμωτατον ἅπασιν ἑαυτὸν καθίστας, ἐν αἷς ὑπετυποῦτο καθολικαῖς πρὸς τὰς ἐκκλησίας ἐπιστολαῖς· ὧν ἐστιν, ἡ μέν πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους, ὀρθοδοξίας κατηχήτικη, εἰρήνης τε καὶ ἑνωσέως ὑποθετική· ἡ δὲ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους, διεγέρτικη πιστέως καὶ τῆς κατὰτὸ εὐαγγελίον πολιτείας· ἧς ὀλιγωρησάντας ἐλεγχεῖ, ὡς ἀν μικροῦ δεῖν ἀποστάντας τοῦ λόγου, ἐξ οὗπέρ τὸν προεστῶτα αὐτῶν Πούπλιον μαρτυρῆσαι κατὰ τοὺς τότε συνεβῆ διωγμούς.

* 1 Cor. 12: 26.

member of the body to stand aloof from the others, has taught them by no means to " have the same care one for another ! !"

The *last* bond of primitive union was the *occasional consultation* of different churches by representatives *convened in a council or synod.* This means of prolonging unity among Christians was for several reasons not very frequently resorted to in the apostolic age. The continual journies of the apostles tended in a measure to answer the same purpose. How often councils for mutual consultation were held, prior to that at Rome, mentioned by Eusebius, we know not ; but the principle being sanctioned by the apostolic example, Acts xv., the church should apply it just as extensively as is found to promote the spirit of union, brotherly love and order among Christians. As however *neither Christ nor his apostles have appointed such bodies as courts of judicature or appeal;* it is probable, that whatever business of this kind is referred to the more extensive judicatories, their decisions should be regarded mainly as advisory, and should have no other force than results from the evidence alleged in support of the opinion given. The danger of such General Synods, Assemblies, or Conventions, arises not so much from the number of churches represented in them, as from the great *number* of the delegates, from the degree of *power* conferred on them by the elementary members of Christ's body, the individual churches ; and from the amount of *actual business* which is *transferred from the churches in their elementary capacity, to these judicatories.* If the delegation be small, so that the whole body will not be unwieldy ; if the business transacted be not such as properly belongs to the individual churches ; if it relate only to the general interests of the church ; and if the powers of the body be only advisory ; this principle of mutual consultation might to a certain extent be safely employed.

In view of these facts and principles, the writer regarded with high approbation the proposition for a re-organization of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church by making it an Advisory Council. That measure, which was proposed in the Biblical Repertory of 1832, was by uncontradicted fame attributed to the Rev. Dr. Alexander, and contains a distinguished specimen of practical wisdom, and enlarged views of the principles of our holy religion, in their application to ecclesiastical jurisprudence. On precisely the same general principles, the General Synod of the Lutheran Church in this country was

founded seventeen years ago, and of its salutary and safe practical operation, scarcely a dissenting voice is heard among the enlightened friends of evangelical piety among us.

We have thus endeavored faithfully to exhibit the features which constituted the unity of the primitive church. Let us now pursue the subject further, deduce the principles furnished by these facts, and finally develope a plan to restore the unity of the body of Christ on the same apostolic principles, which constituted it in the primitive ages; a consummation which ought to be devoutly wished for by every disciple of that Saviour who so earnestly prayed for the union of his followers; an object so dear to the heart of the nobleminded Calvin, that to accomplish it he says: "*As to myself, were I likely to be of any service, I would not hesitate, were it necessary, for such a purpose to cross ten seas.*" (Quantum ad me attinet, siquis mei usus fore videbitur, ne decem quidem maria, si opus sit, ob eam rem trajicere pigeat. Calvin's Epist. p. 61).

CHAPTER III.

Whilst contemplating the church of the Redeemer from the time when the Master tabernacled in the flesh, to the present day, we are, as was formerly remarked, forcibly struck by the contrast between her visible unity in the earlier centuries, and the multitude of her divisions since the Reformation. During the former period, the great mass of the orthodox christian community on earth, constituted one universal or catholic church; excepting only several comparatively small clusters of Christians, such as the Donatists and Novatians. Now, the purest portion of God's heritage, the Protestant world, is cleft into a multitude of parties, each claiming superior purity, each maintaining a separate ecclesiastical organization. The separation of the Protestants from the Papal hierarchy, was an insuperable duty; for Rome had poisoned the fountains of truth by her corruptions, and death or a refusal to drink from her cup was the only alternative. "Babylon, the great, was fallen"

under the divine displeasure, and "the voice from heaven" must be obeyed, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues."* But that the Protestants themselves should afterwards separate from each other; should break communion with those whom they professed to regard as brethren, was inconsistent with the practice of the apostolic church, and, at least in the extent to which it was carried, and the principle on which it was based, detrimental to the interests of the christian cause. But it must not be forgotten, that the position thus assumed, was, so far as its ulterior results are concerned, rather adventitious than designed. The Protestant churches struggled into existence amid circumstances of excitement, oppression and agitation both civil and ecclesiastical. This state of things was highly unpropitious alike to the formation of perfect views of church polity in theory, and their introduction in practice. The Reformation itself, could not have been effected, unless aided by the civil arm, which protected its agents from papal vengeance. A total exclusion of the civil authorities from ecclesiastical action, would probably have blasted the Reformation in the bud; even if the views of the earlier Reformers had led them to desire such exclusion. Owing partly to these circumstances, and partly to the remains of papal bigotry still adhering to them, the Protestants in different countries successively assumed organizations not only entirely separate, as in some respects they properly might be; but having little reference to the church as a whole, and calculated to cast into the back ground the fundamental unity which actually exists between them. Without entering into a detail of their origin, it may not be amiss, in view of the popular reader, to advert to the successive dates of their formation.

The *Lutheran church* grew up with the Reformation itself, which commenced in 1517. The early history of the one, in Germany, Denmark, Prussia, Sweden, and Norway is also the history of the other. The commencement of the church may be dated, either from 1520, when Luther renounced his allegiance to popery, by committing the emblems of papal power, the bulls and canons, to the flames; or, more properly it may be fixed at 1530, when the reformers presented their confession of faith, to the emperor and diet at Augsburg. It is to be regretted, that this eldest branch of the Protestant church adopt-

* Rev. 18: 3, 4.

ed a sectarian name; thus fostering excessive reverence for the opinions of an illustrious yet fallible servant of God, erecting them into a standard of orthodoxy, and making his doctrinal attainments the *ne plus ultra* of ecclesiastical reformation. For, the church being termed Lutheran, it was a very popular argument, which bigots did not fail to wield, that he who rejected any of Luther's opinions was untrue to the church which bore his name. Had some generic designation been assumed, and only generic principles been adopted for the organization of the church, the work of reformation might have been gradually advanced until every vestige of popery was obliterated, without hurling the charge of unfaithfulness at any one. Yet, it is but justice to that distinguished servant of God to add, that the name was given to his followers by his enemies from derision, whilst he protested against it with his accustomed energy. "I beg (said he) that men would abstain from using my name, and would call themselves not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. Neither was I crucified for any one. Paul would not suffer Christians to be called after him, nor Peter, but after Christ (1 Cor. 3: 4, 5). Why should it happen to me, poor, corruptible food of worms, that the disciples of Christ should be called after my abominable name? Be it not so, beloved friends, but let us extirpate party names, and be called Christians; for it is the doctrine of Christ that we teach."

The *German Reformed church* was next established through the agency of that distinguished servant of Christ, Zwingli. He commenced his public efforts as a Reformer in 1519, by opposing the sale of indulgences by the Romish agent Sampson. In 1531 a permanent religious peace was made in Switzerland, securing mutual toleration both to the reformed and to the Catholics, and thus stability was given to this portion of the Protestant Church.

The *Episcopal church* may be dated from 1533, when Henry VIII. renounced his allegiance to the pope, and separated the church of England from the papal see; although the work of actually reforming this church was accomplished at a later date.

The *Baptist church* may be referred to the year 1535, when Menno Simon commenced his career; or to 1536, when it was regularly organized.

The *Calvinistic or Presbyterian church*, using the phrase to designate the church established by Calvin himself, may be

dated at 1536, when he was appointed minister at Geneva, or more properly at 1542 when he established the presbytery there.

The *Presbyterian church* in England, Scotland and America, may be regarded as a continuation of the church, founded by this eminent servant of God.

The *Congregational* or *Independent church* may be dated from 1616, when the first Independent or Congregational church was organized in England by Mr. Jacob.

The modern *Moravian church* or church of the *United Brethren*, may be regarded as originating in 1727, when Count Zinzendorf and Baron Waterville were selected as directors of the fraternity. Both the Moravian and the Baptist churches trace their origin to christian communities prior to the Reformation. But our design is merely to enumerate the dates of the existing most extensive Protestant denominations; in doing which, we have selected the earliest periods, in order that readers of no particular church might dissent or feel aggrieved.

The origin of the *Methodist church* may be traced to 1729, when its honored founder Mr. John Wesley, and Mr. Morgan commenced their meetings for the practical study of the sacred volume.

Numerous other denominations of minor extent, are found among us, whose principles coincide more or less with those of the churches here specified. All these together constitute the aggregate Protestant church, and are the great mass of the visible church of the Redeemer, engaged in promoting his mediatorial reign on earth, and owned by his Spirit's blessing.

Causes of sectarian strife between the different branches of the Protestant church.

In continental Europe the sectarian principle is not exhibited in its full development. There, either the Lutheran or Reformed church, and in some instances both are established by law; and the number of dissenters, if any exist, is very small. In England, where a greater amount of liberty is enjoyed, and the press is unshackled, dissenters from the established church are far more numerous. But it is only in these United States, where Christianity has been divorced from the civil government, and restored to its primitive dependence on its own moral power, that all sects are on perfect equality, and the natural tendency of sectarianism is witnessed in its full latitude. The separation between church and state is worthy of all praise, and demands

our warmest gratitude to Heaven. It has restored the American Protestant church to the original advantages of the golden age of Christianity in the apostolic days. In this land of refuge for oppressed Europe, God has placed his people in circumstances most auspicious for the gradual "perfecting" of his visible kingdom. Here we are enabled, unencumbered by entangling alliances with civil government, to review the history of the Redeemer's kingdom for eighteen hundred years, to trace the rise and progress of error in all its forms, to witness the effects of every different measure, and by a species of experimental eclecticism, rejecting every thing injurious, to combine all that has proved advantageous, and incorporate it in the structure and relations of the Protestant church. And has not God, in his providence called us to this work? Has he not, by our peculiar situation imposed on us this obligation? Ought not every man, be he minister or layman, who wields any influence in any christian denomination, strive to rise to the level of this sublime undertaking, and inquire: Whence originates the strife among the different branches of the Protestant church; and how may their union on apostolic principles be most successfully effected? Among the causes of this strife we may enumerate the following:

1. *The absence of any visible bond, or indication of union, between the different churches in any city, town or neighborhood, whilst each of them is connected to other churches elsewhere of their own denomination.* This circumstance constantly cherishes the unfriendly conviction, that each church prefers other distant churches to their own neighboring brethren. If the churches were all independent, having no closer connexion with any others abroad, than with their neighbors at home, there would be less occasion for this feeling. No bond of outward union at all, would be more conducive to brotherly love among neighbors, than a bond which excludes those around, us and unites us to others afar off. The effect of this stimulant to apathy or disregard between neighboring disciples of the same Saviour is witnessed in our cities, which contain several churches of the same denomination, united by a common confession and by their Synodical or Presbyterial relations. How much nearer do the churches of the same denomination feel to each other, than to other sects not thus connected, though equally and sometimes more contiguous!

2. The next cause of strife among churches *is their separate organization on the ground of doctrinal diversity.* Separate

organization becomes necessary in any association whose members are numerous, and spread over a large extent of country. This is no less the case in church than in state. But the most natural ground of division among those professedly belonging to the same great family, and aiming at the same ends, is geographical proximity; as is seen in the division of our common country into States and these again into counties, and as existed in the christian church in the apostolic age. But when the division is made according to a principle totally different from this, when it is actually made on the ground of difference between certain portions of this common family; it constantly holds up to view not only the existence of some difference, but also the fact, that this difference is so important, as to require those entertaining it to separate from one another. Now as of two conflicting opinions only one can be true; it also implies, that each party regards the other as in important error, and that itself professes superior purity. This is virtually judging our brother, and perpetuating the recollection of our judgment by founding on it a peculiarity in the structure of our ecclesiastical organization. This circumstance is obviously calculated to beget unfriendly feelings, and to cherish bigotry; and its effect will be proportioned to the density and exclusiveness of the organization based on it. In the primitive church, when no different denominations of Christians existed, but all professors of Christianity, of contiguous residence, whether they entirely agreed in opinion or not, belonged to the same church; the bigotry and pride of the human heart found food only in the separate interests of neighboring churches occupying different ground. But to this is now unhappily added the conflict of interests resulting from the occupancy of the same ground by two churches, as also the conflicting interests of separate extended ecclesiastical organizations, aiming to occupy the same location.

3. The third source of sectarian strife, may be found in the use of *transfundamental creeds.** We have already seen that creeds properly constructed are useful in the church. We believe it may easily be established, that either in written or oral form they are essential. They existed in the primitive church in the latter form, and were productive of good and only good. They were soon reduced to writing in the so-called Apostles'

* By transfundamental creeds we would designate those creeds which embody not only the undisputed doctrines of Christianity, but also the sectarian peculiarities of some particular denomination.

creed, and served as a bond of union during the first four centuries of the church, among all who held the fundamentals of truth. But at that time creeds were confined to fundamentals. Neither the Apostles' nor the Nicene creed amounts to more than a single octavo page; and to the whole of the former and most of the latter all the different orthodox churches of the present day could subscribe. That the brevity of these creeds did not arise from the absence of diversity of views is certain. It has been proved in a former part of this Appeal, that there did exist differences of opinion, even in the apostolic age, on some points, regarded by us as highly important. To that evidence, fully satisfactory because derived from God's infallible word, we would here subjoin a highly important passage from Origen, to prove that such diversities of opinion continued to characterize the church from that day till the middle of the third century, at which time he wrote. The apostolic fathers also, would afford us important testimony on this point. Their writings have, indeed, reached us in a corrupted state; yet enough remains fully to answer our purpose; for the differences which they endeavor to allay must have existed. We shall, however, confine ourselves to the passage from Origen, which we believe has not before been presented to the American public. Origen, let it be borne in mind, was the most learned christian writer who had appeared from the time of the apostles. He was born but eighty-five years after St. John's death, and therefore may have seen persons who lived in the apostolic age. The infidel Celsus had asserted, that in the beginning, when Christians were few in number, there was unanimity on all points, but that in his day, the latter part of the second century (A. D. 176), they differed on many subjects. The following is Origen's reply: "But he (Celsus) also asserts, that they (the primitive Christians) all agreed in their opinions; not observing that from the beginning there were different opinions among believers (Christians) as to the selection of the books to be regarded as divine. Moreover, whilst the apostles were yet preaching, and those who were eye-witnesses were teaching the things which they had learned of Jesus, there was not a little dispute among the Jewish believers, concerning those gentiles who embraced the christian doctrines, whether it was their duty to observe the Jewish rites; or whether the burden of clean and unclean meats might not be removed, as unnecessary, from those among the gentiles who abandon the customs of their fa-

thers and believe in Jesus. And in the epistles of Paul we perceive that in the time of those who had seen Jesus, some were found who called in question the resurrection, and disputed whether it had not already taken place; and also concerning the day of the Lord, whether it was just at hand or not: and that (admonition) to avoid profane, vain babblings and the oppositions of knowledge falsely so called, which some professing, have made shipwreck concerning the faith; hence it is manifest that from the very beginning certain differences of opinion occurred, at a time when (as Celsus supposes) the number of the believers was yet small. Then, when discoursing about the differences of opinion amongst Christians, he upbraids us, saying that when the Christians became numerous and were scattered abroad, they were repeatedly split up and cut into parties, each wishing to maintain their own position, and then (he adds)—dividing again, and quarrelling among themselves: until, so to speak, they agreed in only one thing, that is, in name, if even for shame's sake they still have this left in common; but that in all other things they differ. To this we reply, that there never has been a subject, whose principles are of any moment and of importance in life, concerning which different opinions have not existed. Thus, because medicine is useful and necessary to the human family, there are many disputed points in it, relating to the different modes of curing the diseased. Hence different parties (schools or systems) in medicine are confessedly formed among the Greeks, and I believe also among such of the barbarous nations as avail themselves of the healing art. And again, because philosophy professes to teach the truth and instructs us in a knowledge of the things which exist, and how we ought to live, and aims at showing what will be advantageous to our race, it has many topics of dispute. Hence in philosophy also, there are very many parties (systems, schools,) some more and others less distinguished."*

Here, then, we have the testimony alike of the most distin-

* Origenes contra Celsum, pp. 120, 121. edit. Hoeschelii.—It is evident from the context, and certain from history, that Origen when speaking of numerous differences among the Christians of his day, uses the word *αἱρεσις* to signify diversities of opinion, or systems of opinions and parties maintaining them, without any separate ecclesiastical organization based on them, and without interruption of sacramental and ministerial ecclesiastical intercommunion of the parties. We have accordingly thus rendered it in the version in the text.

guished infidel and Christian of the second and third century, to the existence of differences of opinion (not separate ecclesiastical organizations) in the christian church; yet at that time the only creed which it was deemed proper to use, was that termed the Apostles' creed. In short, there is no doubt, that the different so called orthodox Protestant churches, are in reality as much united in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity as the church in the earlier centuries was. But modern creeds instead of giving prominence to this unity, and preserving it by adding a few sentences to these venerable ancient confessions, in order to exclude the fundamental errors which have sprung up since the fourth century, are swelled some to fifty and some to a hundred times their size!! Thus they necessarily introduce so many minor points of doctrine and opinion, that few of the members of the churches professing them do in reality believe all their contents! When the minor points of difference are embodied in a creed, they become the stereotyped characteristics of a new sect, and enlist in their defence many of the unsanctified principles of our nature. They become wedges of dissension to split in pieces the body of Christ, they form permanent barriers of division and bulwarks of schism in his church.

4. The fourth cause of alienation among Christians is the *sectarian training of the rising generation.* No principle is more fully established in the philosophy of mind, no fact more uniformly attested by the experience of ages, than that the impressions of early life are most lasting, that the prejudices of childhood and youth pursue us through every subsequent period of life. And whoever faithfully traces to its source the sectarian alienation of Christians will, we think, be constrained to attribute much of it to early sectarian training.

How often do not many parents in the presence of their children, exhibit their prejudices against other religious denominations? How much more frequently do they exalt their own denomination above all others, either directly or by comparative allusions? Are there not some parents, and alas that it should be so! some pastors too, who strive more by direct effort to instil a disregard for others and a preference for their own sect into the minds of children, long before they are competent to comprehend or estimate the grounds of the supposed preference? What else is this than an effort to sow the seeds of sheer prejudice in the tender minds of children? It is right that the prepossessions and antipathies of youth should be not indeed excited,

but properly directed; yet, for the bleeding Saviour's sake, let the former be enlisted in the favor of Christianity, not of sectarianism, and the latter be directed against the enemies of the cross, and not against those whom we profess to acknowledge as its friends!

5. The next source of alienation among Christians, is what may be termed *sectarian idolatry* or *man-worship*, inordinate veneration for distinguished theologians, such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Wesley and others. What candid man, possessing any extensive acquaintance with the literature of past ages, can deny that the deference awarded to the opinions and practice of these men, is altogether inordinate, entirely beyond what is due to the merits of other men, and far above the measure of their actual superiority. Protestants justly censure the Romish church for reposing such confidence in the authority of the ancient Fathers, that is, of distinguished theologians of the first four or five centuries of the christian church. Yet it may be doubted whether some Protestants have not inadvertently conceded to some of these modern Fathers an influence somewhat similar, possibly in a few cases even equal in degree. The names of these good and great yet fallible men, have become identified with certain distinguishing non-fundamental doctrines which they held, and by which they were distinguished from others. Their authority and influence, acquired by their zeal and success in behalf of the common Christianity, are thus often used as a shield of protection for these minor peculiarities. The very designation of these peculiarities by personal names, calls into play sectarian associations, and sinister feelings, and is a kind of covert appeal to the authority of these Fathers.

Moreover each sect is prone to cultivate almost exclusively the literature of its own denomination. Enter the theological schools or the private libraries of ministers, and you will find that generally Lutherans and Calvinists and Episcopalians and Baptists and Methodists, devote most of their time to the study of authors of their own denominations, and this peculiarity may also be distinctly traced in the libraries of many lay Christians. Many of these distinguished servants of God would have grieved to think of the sectarian use, which posterity has made of their names and literary labors. Listen to the language of Luther, whose name and works were for two centuries especially thus employed in Germany for purposes of strife: "I had cherished

the hope, that henceforth men would apply to the holy Scriptures themselves, and let my books alone; as they have now accomplished their end and have conducted the hearts of men to the Scriptures, which was my design in writing them. What profit is there in the making of many books, and yet remaining ignorant of the book of books. Better far to drink out of the fountain itself, than out of the little rivulets which have conducted you to it.*—Whoever now wishes to have my books, I entreat him by no means to let them be an obstacle to his studying the Scriptures themselves. But let him look upon my books, as I do on the decretals of the popes and books of the sophists, that is, though I occasionally look into them to see what they performed, and to examine the history of the times, I by no means study them under the impression, that I must do as they teach.† Yet there is reason to fear, that some good men have by early and long continued training become so much accustomed to test and value their views, rather as being Lutheran or Calvinistic than biblical, have so long been in the habit of dwelling on the conformity of their sentiments to those of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, or some other worthy of the church, that they would feel deeply distressed and almost lost, if these names were wrested from them! In the spirit of such sectarianism we might commiserate the condition of the primitive disciples whose Christianity was based on the Saviour alone! We might exclaim, "Unhappy Paul, thou hadst no Luther nor Calvin nor Wesley to glory in, or whose name thou couldst bear in addition to that of Christ!" But were such the feelings of Paul? He might himself have been a Luther, a Calvin, a Wesley, his name the watchword of a sect; but the noble-minded Paul would glory only in Christ. He would not allow the adoption of any sectarian name in the church. Sectarian names and party divisions he denounced as carnal. "Therefore" (said he) "let no man glory in men; for they are all yours (they are all the property of the whole church), whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas," (and we may add Luther and Calvin and Wesley): all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. So then (οὕτως) let a man consider us (me and Apollos, etc.) as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (but not as leaders of parties)."‡ He would

* Luther's Deutsche Werke, B. 14. S. 422. † Ibid. S. 490.

‡ 1 Cor. 3: 21—4: 1.

have all believers called Christians and only Christians. All that this name implied he wished to be, and neither more nor less. Happy day! when this spirit shall return to the church! Then she may celebrate a jubilee, a glorious jubilee; and it will literally be not a centennial, but a millennial jubilee. The last thousand years will have witnessed but one!!

Nor would we pass in silence a collateral evil, resulting from the almost exclusive cultivation of sectarian literature. As this literature is all of a date subsequent to the Reformation, its perusal impresses the Protestant laity with the modern origin of our churches; and leaves them in almost total darkness as to our real identity with the church of the earlier ages. Hence our people are unduly impressed by the Romish claim to superior antiquity, and an advantage is conceded to papists of which they cunningly avail themselves. If Protestants selected their literature promiscuously from among the different sects according to the intrinsic merits of the writers, it would tend much to promote actual unity and mutual esteem among themselves; and if, both in their literature and creeds, they gave greater prominence to their identity with the primitive church, they would make the laity feel their connexion with the christians of the earlier centuries, and thus nullify the most popular argument by which papists proselyte Protestant members.

6. Another source of sectarian discord, is *ecclesiastical pride*. As long as man is sanctified but in part, this element of native depravity will more or less influence the disciples of Christ; will seek and often find fuel even in the sanctuary of God. Each sect is naturally disposed to regard its institutions and its ministers as the most learned and able, or its members as most genteel, or its rites most fashionable, its churches most splendid, or its members the most pious, its pales as far the best road to heaven. Ministers are tempted to be influenced by the fact, that they regard *their* churches as presenting the most conspicuous theatre for the display of their talents, or holding out the fairest prospects of advancement; their audiences as the most intelligent, their support as the most liberal, or as best secured against contingencies. Hence they are in danger of looking on their less favored neighbors with secret disrespect; of cherishing ecclesiastical pride, and having their judgment warped by it. We do not assert that all ministers or laymen yield to the influence of this temptation, yet happy is that man, who, on an impartial examination of his feelings as in the pre-

sence of God, stands fully acquitted by his own conscience! That caution here is not superfluous, was evidently the opinion of the great apostle of the gentiles, who having himself repelled all sectarian honors, gives double force to his admonition: "These things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred (applied) to myself and to Apollos, for your sakes, that ye might learn by us not to esteem ministers (see v. 1.) above what is written (in v. 1. and ch. 3: 5—9, 21.) that no one of you may, on account of one (minister), be puffed up against another!"

7. The last source of sectarian discord to be noticed is *conflict of pecuniary interest* between neighbouring ministers and churches. This principle applies to the feelings of the minister in regard to his salary, which depends in some measure on the increase of his church. In reference to laymen, it applies to their raising funds for all ecclesiastical purposes. The more their church prospers and receives additions, the more will their pecuniary liabilities be divided, the more easily will the burden rest on their shoulders. Hence both pastors and people are tempted to envy and jealousy towards their christian neighbors of other denominations, because the success of either party, is more or less at the expense of the other. The success of either, diminishes the amount of materials for the others to act on, and this is a matter of serious moment to the parties especially in smaller towns and villages, where often twice as many ministers are stationed as are needed, or can be supported.

From this difficulty the primitive church was almost entirely exempt. In the earlier ages it was customary to appoint, that is, ordain several elders, or as we now term them ministers, in every church, who divided the labor between them, and generally continued to prosecute their secular business, thus in a great measure supporting themselves; whilst it was customary from the beginning to provide for those who went abroad as *missionaries*, and travelled from place to place.* The only fund of the church, was that which arose from the voluntary offerings of the members on each Lord's day. This fund however was considerable; and it was probably as a stimulus to liberality, that the custom of reading off the names of the contributors was introduced; though its professed design was to commend them to the special prayers of the church.† In the third cen-

* Fuch's Bibliothek der Kirchenversammlungen, Vol. I. p. 72, 73.

† Ibid. Vol. I. p. 72.

tury, when the duties of ministers had become so greatly multiplied as to require their entire time, they were in some countries prohibited from following any secular profession, as we learn from Cyprian,* and other sources. The sixth of the *Apostolic Canons* reads thus:

Canon 6. *Neither a bishop, presbyter nor deacon shall engage in secular employment, on pain of being deposed from office.*

And the fortieth canon is as follows:

Canon 40. *We ordain that the bishop shall have the control of the congregational property. For as the precious souls of men are committed to his care, much more ought he to have the control of the church property, that he may freely arrange every thing, that he may aid the poor through the instrumentality of the presbyters and deacons, in the fear of God and in all honesty. He shall also be permitted to apply a portion of it to his own indispensable wants, if he needs it, as also for strange Christians who have come as guests; and in these cases it is not necessary to suffer any want* (μεταλαμβανειν δε και αὐτον των δεοντων, εἰγε δεειτο, εἰς τας ἀναγκαιας αὐτω χρειας και των ἐπιξενουμενων ἀδελφων, ὡς κατα μηδενα τροπον αὐτους ὑστερεισθαι).

The fifty-eighth canon likewise relates to this subject:

Canon 58. *If a bishop refuses to supply the indispensable wants of a poor minister* (namely from the church funds) *he shall be set aside; and if he still refuses to do it, let him be deposed as a murderer of his brethren.*†

At the Synod of Elvira, (in Spain, near the site of the present Granada,) the date of which is not entirely certain, though fixed with probability about the year 313, a restriction was imposed on ministers, by the eighteenth canon, which however presupposes that in Spain the secular business of ministers was not yet entirely prohibited.

Canon 18. *Bishops, elders and deacons shall not leave their place of residence for the sake of trade, nor traverse the provinces for the purposes of attending profitable fairs. They may, for the purpose of gaining a subsistence, send a son, or*

* Cypriani ep. 66. to the church at Furnae. Neander, sup. cit. p. 305.

† Roessler's Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, Vol. 4. p. 232, 242, 248.

*or freedman, or hireling, or friend, or any one else; and if they wish to pursue any secular business, let it be within their province.**

In accordance with these original documents, is the opinion of Dr. Neander, who is confessedly the most learned writer of the present age, on the ancient history of the church. "It is almost certain (says he) that in the beginning, those who held offices in the church, continued to pursue their secular business, and thereby supported their families, as they had previously done. The congregations, which consisted chiefly of the poor, were scarcely able to provide for the support of their ministers (presbyters) and deacons, especially as at that time many other demands were made on the congregational treasury, such as for the support of the destitute widows, of the poor, of the sick, and of orphans. And it may be that the ministers often belonged to the wealthiest members of the church, and indeed this must often have been the case, as their office required a degree of previous cultivation of mind and manners, which could more frequently be found among persons in the higher or middle walks of life, than among the lower classes of society. If it was necessary that the presbyters or bishops, as they were in all respects to be an example to the flock, should also have been distinguished among the Christians for their hospitality (1 Tim. 3: 2), they must have belonged to those in easy circumstances, of whom the number was not large,—and how could such persons have permitted themselves to be supported by the savings of their more needy brethren! The apostle Paul does indeed declare, that the missionaries who went abroad to publish the gospel, are entitled to a support from those for whose spiritual benefit they labor, but we cannot hence infer the same in regard to the officers of individual congregations. The former could not well unite their secular profession with the duties of their spiritual calling, although to the self-denial of Paul even this was possible. But the latter could at first easily combine their secular profession with their ecclesiastical office. Nor was there any thing offensive in such a union ac-

* Ibid. Vol. 4. p. 280, 281. Episcopi, Presbyteri et Diacones de locis suis negotiandi causa non discedant; nec circumeuntes provincias quaestuosas nundinas sectentur. Sane ad victum sibi conquirendum aut filium, aut libertum, aut mercenarium, aut amicum, aut quemlibet mittant, et si voluerint negotiari, intra provinciam negotientur.

cording to the primitive views of the Christians; for they were convinced, that every earthly calling also could be sanctified by the christian design for which it is pursued, and they knew that even an apostle followed a secular business whilst engaged in publishing the gospel. But when the congregations became larger, and the duties of the church officers more numerous, when the duty of teaching was chiefly confined to the ministers, as the office of the ministers required all their time and exertions if they would perform them faithfully; it was often no longer possible for them to provide for their own support, and the congregations having become larger, contained more wealth, and were now able to support them. The salary of the ministers was paid out of the congregational treasury, which was supplied by a voluntary contribution from each member at the meeting for public worship on every Lord's day, or as in Northern Africa, on the first Sunday of each month. Ministers were now urged to abstain from worldly business; and in the third century they were absolutely prohibited from all such employment, even from the duties of a guardian. This regulation was doubtless founded on a very good reason, and was intended for the very salutary purpose of preventing the clergy from forgetting their sacred calling amid their worldly engagements; for we see from the work of Cyprian, *de lapsis*, that during the long continued peace, a worldly spirit had already crept in among the bishops, and that, immersed in secular business, they neglected their spiritual duties and the welfare of their churches."*

Such then are the undoubted facts in the case. In the beginning there was not, there could not be any conflict of pecuniary interest between adjoining ministers and congregations. But it is evident, that even after it became necessary for ministers to relinquish their secular business and be supported by their congregations which they had a clear right to demand as soon as the congregations were large enough to support them, as Paul distinctly teaches in 1 Cor. ix. scarcely any more difficulty could arise; because, there being but one denomination of Christians, there could not be several conflicting churches aiming to occupy the same ground, and the cases would be rare in which more ministers would be stationed in one place, than the population required and could support.

* Neander's Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche, Vol. I. p. 303, 304, 305.

How great the difficulties are, which now arise from this source is well known. Yet they might be greatly diminished by the plan of union hereafter proposed, if, a) the confederated denominations would resolve not to send into any neighborhood more ministers than would constitute a reasonable supply, say one to every thousand souls. b) Let all the members of the confederated churches, resident in such bounds unite in supporting one and the same minister. And c) if the whole confederated population of such a district is unable to furnish an adequate support for a minister, let application be made to the Home Missionary Society for aid. Thus would many laborers be spared for destitute portions of our land and of our globe, brotherly love would more abound in the church at home, and unity of spirit be greatly promoted.

CHAPTER IV.

Remedy for these evils, or plan for the restoration of Catholic Union on Apostolic Principles.

Any plan of union, in order to possess a claim to the attention of the different christian denominations generally, must be based on apostolic principles, must be accordant with the spirit and principles of the New Testament, or deducible from them. It must leave untouched the unalienable rights and obligations of Christians, and therefore must possess the following attributes:

1. It must require of no one the renunciation of any doctrine or opinion believed by him to be scriptural or true.

2. It must concede to each denomination or branch of the church of Christ, the right to retain its own organization, or to alter or amend it at option, leaving every thing relative to government, discipline, and worship, to be managed by each denomination according to its own views for the time being. The principle of ecclesiastical associations is scriptural; the mode of its application and the extent of its use, are not decided by the sacred volume, and therefore are just matter for private judgment and progressive experience.

3. It must dissuade no one from discussing fundamentals and non-fundamentals in the spirit of christian love, and amicably showing why he believes some non-fundamental opinions held by any

of his brethren to be incorrect.—Controversies might even exist among the confederated brethren, under the influence of scriptural union; but they would be divested of most of their bitterness, because the points at issue would confessedly be *non-fundamental*, having little or no perceptible influence on christian practice, involving no pecuniary loss by ejection from a pastoral relation, and menacing no ecclesiastical disabilities.

4. The plan must be applicable to all the orthodox christian denominations, to all that are regarded as portions of Christ's visible church on earth. It must embrace all whom the apostles and primitive Christians would have admitted to the one catholic or universal church; all whom God has owned by the influence of his Spirit and grace. Upon this ground James, Peter, and John admitted Paul who had formerly been a persecutor of the brethren, and "gave to him the right hand of fellowship."* The Saviour never enjoined on men the duty of fixing the terms of communion in his church. This he has himself done in his word by precept and by the apostolic example; and we are treading on forbidden ground when we separate those whom God by his grace and Spirit hath joined together. This is indeed not the design of the different denominations, but is it not too true, that it is virtually the result of the present state of sectarian division?

Having now considered the character of primitive unity, and the causes of discord in the different branches of the Protestant church; let us take our stand on the high ground of apostolic principles, and from that elevated post survey the divided heritage of the Saviour, and inquire how may the spirit, and, as far as possible, the form of primitive unity be restored? And may that blessed Saviour, who promised wisdom from above to them that ask it, to lead them into all necessary truth, grant us the tuition of his Spirit to guide and bless this humble effort for the accomplishment of his own fervent prayer in behalf of his disciples: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee."

I. Some few advocates of union have proposed, that all others should abandon their systems and peculiarities, and unite with them by conforming in all things to their views and practice.

* Gal. 2: 9: When James, Cephas and John, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

As this method violates the unalienable rights and obligations of Christians, by requiring the abandonment of what they believe truth, and the practice of what they consider error, it cannot be regarded as judicious, or as promising any success. It would, moreover, betray extreme weakness for any one christian sect at this late day, to calculate on the universal adoption of its peculiarities by all others. Better, far better will it be, that all endeavor to forget sectarian differences, and cöoperate for the publication of the Gospel to the 600,000,000 of perishing heathen, with a degree of ardor and cordiality, which will make us wear the appearance of one church.

II. It has been proposed, that each denomination should renounce its standards of doctrine and government and worship, and then all unite in one new, short confession, embracing only those doctrines held in common by all, and establishing such a system of government, as all could conscientiously adopt; whilst entire liberty and privilege of diversity should be enjoyed by all on every point not determined by the new standards.

This plan is liberal in its principles, violates none of the unalienable rights and obligations of Christians, and therefore possesses claims of the highest order. It lacks but one attribute of a proper union for Christians, on an apostolic basis. The apostles and primitive churches maintained unity with all whom they acknowledged as Christians; but this plan, we fear, is not applicable to all orthodox christian denominations. It would promise a union of the Lutherans, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, the German Reformed, the Dutch Reformed, the Baptists, and, in short, of all those orthodox denominations, which hold parity of ministers. The Moravians, or United Brethren also could unite so far as doctrine is concerned, for as they adopt and have always held the Augsburg Confession, there would be no difficulty. The same is true so far as doctrine is concerned, of the Episcopal church, the Methodist and all other churches which practise diocesan episcopacy in our land. But the writer is unable to perceive how these denominations could all unite on any middle ground of church government. We must either have diocesan bishops or practise ministerial parity; and any plan, constructed on the principle of uniformity, must adopt either the one or the other, and could not enjoin both. But these churches are as orthodox and pious as any others, and God has as distinctly owned them as his own;

so that we should feel criminal in virtually pronouncing that unclean which God has sanctified, were we to advocate a plan of union, which would exclude either the friends of ministerial parity or imparity. But if this plan were even feasible, its adoption would probably not result in much good; as it would collect into one body for religious worship, those whose modes and habits of worship are so materially diverse as to justify the anticipation of but little harmony or edification.

III. Our own plan, which appears to us more accordant with the requisite attributes of a plan for christian union on apostolic principles, more feasible, and more safe, is embraced in the following features:

First Feature. *The several christian denominations shall retain each its own present ecclesiastical organization, government, discipline, and mode of worship.* It is conceded by the great body of Christians, that the Scriptures do not determine all the particulars of any system of church government, but leave the matter, excepting some important outlines, to the conscientious judgment and experience of the church in every age, and under every form of civil government; and the few who think they find their entire system of government in Scripture, do not regard it as so essential as to lead them to deny the christian character of others. Hence every church has an equal right deliberately to test her forms of ecclesiastical organization by experience; and diversity of practice on this point, ought neither to preclude ecclesiastical communion, nor impede substantial union among the parties. This principle is distinctly avowed in the mother symbol of Protestantism, the Augsburg Confession: "For the true unity of the church (say the confessors) nothing more is required than agreement concerning the doctrines of the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary, that the same human traditions, that is, rites and ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere observed."* It is indeed true, that whilst many churches have no connection whatever with each other even though contiguous; others are united together more closely than any of the apostolic churches were. But the questions whether and when they shall relax these sectarian bonds, should be left to their own decision. The evils of too close a union in extended bodies are beginning to be extensively felt; and if through the influence of the impartial investigation, fostered by the kind of union

* Augsburg Confession, Art. VII.

proposed in this Appeal, some churches should relinquish any features of their ecclesiastical organization, as is entirely possible; they have full liberty to reform themselves, and, under the progressive light of God's providence, gradually, to assume towards each other and towards the great body of the Protestant church, whatever relation and organization appear to them best adapted to the millennial age. But the attempt, to unite all the churches in our land under the control of one judicatory of supervision, jurisdiction, and appeal, appears to the writer neither desirable nor safe. It would be a distinct approximation to a new hierarchy. Very extensive courts are too cumbersome for efficient action, business is retarded, power tends to accumulation, the rights of conscience are in danger of being infringed either by statute, or by an accumulated moral influence which crushes all that refuses to submit to its dictation.

Moreover, so long as men entertain materially different views of government and modes of worship, it cannot be conducive to harmony or edification, to press them to unite on any one form. The attempt to promote union by the immediate abandonment of existing organizations, would seem to be inexpedient also for another reason. Experience proves it dangerous suddenly to unsettle the long established habits of the community; lest being released from the old, they fail generally to settle down with firmness on any thing new that is better. But the first feature of our plan, by stipulating that each denomination shall retain its organization as long as it shall see fit, provides against this danger, and leaves each denomination as an independent community to watch the effects of the other features hereafter proposed, and decide for itself how far to accede to the terms of union, and how long to adhere to them. It also provides for the indulgence of existing diversities and preferences so long as they shall continue; whilst the other features will gradually tend to diminish them; thus inviting external uniformity no faster than unity of spirit and of views has fully prepared the way. And, finally, this feature would leave untouched the relations, government and charters of the various religious, theological and benevolent institutions, whilst the general plan of union would promote unity of spirit and efficient coöperation among them all, for accelerating the grand enterprise of the christian church, to preach the gospel to every rational creature.

Second Feature. *Let each of the confederated denominations formally resolve for itself, not to discipline any member or*

minister, for holding a doctrine believed by any other denomination whose christian character they acknowledge, provided his deportment be unexceptionable, and he conform to the rules of government, discipline and worship adopted by said denomination. This would be actually retaining in good standing all, whom the apostles would have retained. And yet, such is the influence of habit and long familiarity with sectarian organizations, that to some this feature of our plan will appear altogether impracticable. But if it is so in any portion of the church, it must be from want of christian charity, of that grace enjoined by the apostle, "not to judge a brother," (Romans xiv.), from indisposition or inability to obey the apostolic precept, to *receive* those who are weak in the faith, *but not to doubtful disputation.* If then it be only our want of charity which disqualifies us for the adoption of this feature of union, let us not assail it; but set about reforming ourselves, and enlarging our hearts, until they cordially respond to the injunction of the great apostle of the Gentiles, to receive those who are weak (in our judgment, defective,) in the faith. It is true, the apostle Peter denounced some as false teachers, and Paul commanded the excommunication of others; but what were the crimes or heresies of which these persons were convicted? If they were such as all the orthodox churches would unite in regarding an ample ground of excommunication, and if in no instance the apostles enjoined discipline, for a point which any orthodox denomination would regard as insufficient, then the apostolic example affords full sanction for our plan, because this is exactly the ground which it assumes, and by its provisions all would be excluded whom the apostles would reject; and is not that enough? As to false doctrine, we find Peter denouncing those as *false* teachers who "bring in damnable heresies (αἱρεσεις ἀπωλείας, destructive heresies or divisions), *denying even the Lord that bought them.*"[1] And, it is scarcely necessary to say, that such errorists would unhesitatingly be excluded by the terms of the proposed union, as they also were from the churches of the earlier centuries by the apostles' creed. Peter denounced Simon Magus as "having neither part nor lot in this matter," but it was for attempting to bribe the apostles and *believing* that the miraculous gifts of God could be purchased with money.[2] The apostle Paul wishes the Galatians to cut

[1] 2 Pet. 2: 1. [2] Acts 8: 9, 10.

off certain persons,[1] but they were guilty of having denied the doctrine of salvation by grace on account of the merits of Christ. they made "Christ of no effect,"[2] maintaining (probably, not by inference of others) that men must be "justified by the law;"[3] thus "preaching another gospel,"[4] and denying a fundamental doctrine, held by all the orthodox denominations, that salvation is by grace, through the merits of Christ. And in his first epistle to Timothy, the same apostle predicts, that "in aftertimes some shall *depart*, (or rather, apostatize ἀποστήσονται) from the faith. And what was it in them which he denounced as *apostasy* from the faith? He himself informs us, that it was giving heed to seducing spirits," and believing the doctrines concerning (not devils, but δαιμονίων demons, or) inferior deities such as worshipped heroes or saints, speaking lies in hypocrisy, "having their conscience seared," "forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats." Here again it will be conceded, that any church deserving the name of orthodox, would not hesitate to exclude any one who should be chargeable with the counts summed up by the apostle, and so mournfully applicable to the Romish church. And, finally, the beloved apostle John warns his readers against some false teachers, whom he styles antichrists. But what does he represent them as teaching? "Who is the liar, but he who *denieth that Jesus is the Christ* (the Messiah promised in the Old Testament)? He is the antichrist, that denieth *the Father and the Son*."[5] And "many deceivers are entered into the world, who do not confess that *Jesus Christ came into the world*, this is a deceiver and an antichrist."[6] Now these, if we mistake not, are all the instances in which the apostles either expressly enjoined excommunication for error in doctrine, or denounced the errorists in language implying, that they ought to be regarded, not as erring brethren, but as apostates from Christianity; and, as not one of these errors is held by any of the so-called orthodox churches, as every one of them is denounced by them, the plan we propose would reach them all, and thus the rigor of discipline be quite as great as the apostles enjoined.

In addition to these errors in doctrine, the apostle has enumerated a list of practical abuses, as proper causes of ecclesiastical discipline, lest a little leaven of sin should corrupt the

[1] Gal. 5: 12. [2] 5: 4. [3] 5: 4. [4] 1: 6, 8, 9.
[5] 1 John 2: 22. [6] 2 John v. 7.

whole church, namely incest,[1] fornication, dishonesty in the pursuit of wealth, idolatry, railing, drunkenness and extortion. To this class also belong the apostle's injunction: "A man that is a schismatic (*αἱρετικον*, a maker of divisions or sects or parties in the church),[2] after the first and second admonition reject," and that of the Saviour to exclude one who will not hear the church. Yet as these are not doctrinal aberrations, they are not affected by the plan of union, since its first feature provides that each denomination shall retain its rules of government, discipline and worship.

And is there no passage in Scripture justifying discipline for doctrinal errors of a minor grade? The apostle does indeed command us "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." Yet, as he does not specify how we ought to contend, whether by preaching, or writing, or ecclesiastical discipline, it is uncertain whether discipline was meant. And admitting that he also intended discipline, it seems reasonable, that it should be employed only in defence of those doctrines which were certainly delivered to the saints; and he could not have meant that some saints should turn their brethren out of the church, for holding sentiments which others whom they acknowledged to be saints, and who remained in the church, believed to be a part of the gospel of Christ. If excommunication were one of the appointed means for *ascertaining* the truth, it might with propriety be applied in doubtful cases. But the New Testament represents it as a penalty, to be inflicted on those who have so criminally and materially forsaken the path of truth or of virtue, as to be unworthy of the christian name. Hence it ought not to be applied in reference to points on which Christians of equal piety, talent, and grace, are in debate, whether they belong to the gospel of Christ or not.

That we are not allowed in regard to matters disputed among Christians, to act as if we were certainly right, is evident from the express injunctions of the apostles to the contrary. We are

[1] 1 Cor. 5: 11.

[2] This version after much examination seems to the writer the true one. It is sustained by three-fourths of the best critics, such as Michaelis, Schleusner, Wahl, De Wette, Stoltz, Heumann, Van Ess, Seiler, etc. But should we even adopt the common version, the passage is inapplicable, as the context does not decide what errors the apostle considered heresies.

[3] Matt. 18: 17.

commanded to "receive him that is weak in the faith (him who, in our judgment, is in error on some points); but not to doubtful disputations (not for the purpose of disputing about his scruples, or deciding on them).[1] Again, "Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind." Again, "Why dost thou judge (condemn) thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.[2] Paul warns Timothy against "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof come envy, strifes, railings, evil surmisings (unjust suspicions), perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds," etc.[3] Again, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." And again, "Follow charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart; But foolish and (ἀπαιδευτους) *untaught* questions (*which had not been decided by the apostles*) avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."[4]

We are therefore commanded on the one hand to "cut off those antichrists who preach another gospel," and on the other, not to judge (pass sentence, or condemn) him whom, on the whole, we regard as a brother; but to receive him and to avoid foolish and *untaught questions*, QUESTIONS NOT CLEARLY DECIDED IN SCRIPTURE. If we unite these two precepts into one, they will be equivalent, we think, to the general command to discipline men for denying what is certainly an essential part of the gospel of Christ, but not for any doctrine about which acknowledged Christians differ, and which is therefore doubtful. For we suppose the following rule will be found a fair, safe and tangible one: *That all those doctrines which the great body of all Christians whom God has owned by his grace and Spirit, and who have free access to the Scriptures, agree in finding in them, are certainly taught there; and all those points on which they differ are less certain, are doubtful.* This rule is based on the dictates of common sense, that if the Scriptures are a revelation from God to man, they must on all points necessary to salvation, be intelligible to all impartial and competent inquirers; and that true Christians, who are engaged in daily efforts to serve God, and who bear in their hearts and exhibit in their lives, the evidences of God's grace and Spirit, are the most sin-

[1] Rom. 14: 1. [2] 14: 5—10. [3] 1 Tim. 6: 4.
[4] 2 Tim. 2: 14, 23.

cere, impartial and competent inquirers into his word. Now we suppose, that the great mass of true Christians in our land will be comprehended not in any one sect, but in the aggregate of all the orthodox protestant denominations.

Again, the judgment of each denomination, as to the most important points of doctrine taught in the Scriptures is confessedly set forth by the creed which it professes. Hence those doctrines which are taught in common by the creeds of all the so-called orthodox Protestant denominations, and as far as thus unitedly taught, may be safely regarded as clearly revealed in the book of God. We limit the rule to *Protestant* denominations, because in the papal sect, the mass of the people have not access to the word of God, and believe the doctrines of their creed simply because their church teaches them. It is limited to *orthodox* denominations, because there are unhappily some in our land professing to receive the Scriptures, but in reality rejecting their divine inspiration, and, as we are constrained to believe, denying the Lord that bought them, and preaching another Christ. Let it not be supposed, that this rule resembles that of the Romanists, who explain the Scriptures according to the pretended unanimous consent of the fathers; for those fathers instead of constituting the great mass or majority of believers in any age, were not one in a million. Nor could the mass of believers in any age fall under our rule, unless they had free and uncontrolled access to the Scriptures, either in the original, if its languages were vernacular to them, or in a faithful version. It could therefore apply only to the Protestant churches, and to the churches of the first few centuries before ecclesiastical enactments interfered with the free unbiassed use of the Scriptures. And concerning the opinions of the mass of believers in the earlier centuries, we know next to nothing, except that they received the so-called Apostles' creed.

We are thus conducted, by Scripture and reason, to the adoption of the *second feature* of the proposed catholic union, namely, *not to discipline a brother, whose deportment is unexceptionable, and who conforms to our existing regulations of government, discipline and worship, for holding a doctrine believed by any acknowledged orthodox denomination.* This practice, so far as the Scriptures enable us to judge, accords with that of the apostolic churches; it certainly agrees with the practice of the church in the first four centuries after the apostles, for they disciplined only for the denial of a doctrine taught

in the Apostles', and afterwards in the Nicene creed, all of which are received by every orthodox denomination. Not one of the distinguishing points on which Protestants differ, is determined in either the Apostles' or the Nicene creed, and therefore it is indisputable, that any one of these denominations would have been received and retained (not disciplined) by all other portions of the so-called universal (catholic) church.

And why ought not the different branches of the Protestant church to adopt this rule? That persons differing on these disputed doctrinal points, but agreeing in their views of church government, discipline and mode of worship, can live harmoniously in the same church, and coöperate cordially in the duties and privileges of church members, is not a matter of mere speculative conjecture. It is a notorious fact that in every denomination there are not a few among the pious laity, living and cordially coöperating in the same church, who differ from each other, as much as the creeds of the several denominations differ. The writer has personally known many instances of this kind in the Lutheran, Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, and has no doubt that cases equally frequent occur in the other denominations. If this can be done by pious laymen, there is no reason why pious ministers could not live together in the same unity of spirit, notwithstanding minor differences in doctrinal views; especially if they were taught in their theological course, themselves to regard as less important the several points which separate the orthodox churches, and in their public exercises to lay the more stress on the cardinal doctrines of the christian scheme. It is well known that in the Episcopal church ministers of different doctrinal views exist and labor in friendship. "Perhaps" (says the liberal and amiable author of 'Hints on Catholic Union,'[1]) "there is not a shade or variety of theological opinion, within the circle of evangelical truth, that has not had an advocate among the divines of the Church of England." In the Presbyterian church also a large number of ministers have believed in general atonement, whilst others, agreeably to their Confession, consider the atonement as limited. Yet these brethren have generally lived together and coöperated in peace until recently. At present, for reasons, into which our design does not urge us to inquire, these differing brethren in the Presbyterian church are engaged in warm disputations, whilst among

[1] See Hints on Catholic Union, by a Presbyter of the Protestant Episcopal Church, p. 46. New York, 1836.

our Episcopal brethren, the same differences still exist and are regarded with christian charity. And why should a Presbyterian, who regards a dissentient Episcopalian or a Methodist as a brother, condemn the member of his own church or ministry, who holds similar views? Why should any man regard that as heresy in a Presbyterian, which in a Methodist or Episcopalian, is, according to his own judgment, consistent with christian character, and comports with a life of acknowledged piety and usefulness? The only conceivable difference is, that the one may be regarded as violating the obligation of his creed, whilst the others do not violate it. This is indeed highly important to the character of the individual. No man should teach a doctrine which he believes to be inconsistent with the creed of his church, if he pledged himself to uphold every individual doctrine contained in it, and if his promise was not, as some suppose it to be, a promise to receive the confession as teaching *the general system* of truth revealed in Scripture. If there be diversity of opinion as to the nature of the subscription to a creed, whether it binds to every individual doctrine, or only to the *system* of truths contained in it; *this point ought doubtless to be first settled.*[1] Whilst it remains under dispute, every attempt at discipline will be encumbered by a double issue. The friends of liberal construction will undertake to prove, that they have not abandoned the creed (meaning its general system of truth); whilst the advocates of rigid construction will prove that they have not adhered to eve-

[1] It has been asserted on the authority of early records that the principle of liberal construction was adopted near the origin of the Presbyterian church in this country, and was practised on, and the fact appears to be established by the testimony of President Davies recently published in the "American Quarterly Register" for May 1837, p. 316. In an extract from his diary, during a visit to England in behalf of Princeton College, under date March nineteenth, 1754, we find the following reply given by Mr. Davies to Mr. Prior, who inquired, whether the Presbyterians in America would admit any person to the ministry, without his subscribing the Westminster Confession: "I replied that we allowed the candidate to mention his objections against any article in the Confession, and the judicature judged whether the articles objected against, were essential to Christianity; and if they judged they were not, they would admit the candidate notwithstanding his objections. He (Mr. Prior) seemed to think that we were such rigid Calvinists that we would not admit an Arminian to communion."

ry individual doctrine, and will expatiate on the guilt of violating the obligation imposed by the confession.

Would it not be far better for both parties to inquire *whether they have a right from apostolic precept or example, to bind either themselves or others to more than the fundamental truths of christian doctrine, and to as many points of government, discipline and worship as are actually necessary to harmonious coöperation?* If the views of this Appeal be correct, then subscription to transfundamental doctrinal creeds is always wrong, and if wrong then it ceases to be binding so soon as its impropriety is seen, and ought to be retracted, whilst the creed should be reduced to fundamentals, or subscription be required only "to the fundamental doctrines of the Bible as contained in the creed." For, after the failure of extended creeds to produce unanimity, and after their tendency to cause strife and divide the body of Christ, have become as certain as any other matter of historical record; why should protestants continue to bind either themselves, or others to them? Especially, as such extended creeds were unheard of in the days of the apostles, and for hundreds of years after? If the same word of God which we now possess, when aided by the oral instruction and the personal example of the apostles, could not produce entire unanimity among the primitive Christians, how could it be expected to effect more at the present time? or, why should we require greater unanimity than the primitive Christians did, as a term of ecclesiastical communion?

So long as there is the same diversity of talent, of mental temperament, of habits of education, and of supposed interest, such diversity will continue to exist. Nor ought it to be regarded as necessarily criminal, or as inconsistent with christian fellowship and fidelity. Difference on non-essentials has no perceptible influence on christian character and practice. There are differences in other departments of human knowledge, and some even connected with religion, of equal magnitude, such as the value of a death bed repentance, the mode of treating awakened sinners and of conducting revivals, etc., and yet, because these points are not settled in the creed, men agree to differ on them, their peace and harmonious coöperation are rarely disturbed for any length of time; for as Luther justly remarked, *alia est concordia fidei, alia charitatis.* Such variety of opinions on non-fundamentals moreover, may even exert a salutary tendency, may stimulate men to inquiry and peaceful discussion,

thus keeping alive a healthful spirit of investigation, and preventing the indifference, which some have apprehended, might result from the absence of extensive creeds.

Under the operation of this feature of union, full liberty of investigation would be allowed within the bounds of fundamentals, without the danger of exclusion from house and home, or pastoral charge. And, is it not reasonable to suspect that that system which cannot trust itself to the full and unbiassed influence of God's word without the artificial aid of creeds, and those peculiarities which need to be instilled into the youthful mind more explicitly than the Bible teaches them, lest they be lost, are erroneous, are not worth keeping; and that permitting them to become obsolete, would only advance the unity of the church? Every disciple of Christ ought to be willing to see the peculiarities of his own denomination cast into the crucible of God's word, and exposed to the unrestrained action of Bible truth and Bible principles, in order that the truth of God might thus be gradually developed in its full purity over the whole church, the breaches in Zion's walls be healed, and one peculiar people zealous of good works, be raised up to God. The writer takes pleasure in being able to cite in support of his position the opinion of that distinguished servant of God, Calvin, whose zeal against *fundamental* errorists will not be disputed, but whose magnanimous liberality in reference to all but fundamentals, appears to be but little known and still less appreciated. He even goes much further than our plan of union proposes, and dissuades from schism, if a church neglect to discipline for the grossest immoralities; whilst our plan proposes, that in regard to government, discipline and mode of worship, each one shall, as heretofore, connect himself with that branch of the church, whose forms he believes best calculated to advance the kingdom of the Redeemer. His language, in a letter to Farrel, is this: "I only contended for this, that *they should not create schism in any church, which, although very corrupt in morals, and infected with strange doctrines, had not entirely departed from that doctrine, on which Paul informs us the church of Christ is founded.*"[1] And it was in

[1] Hoc unum contendebam, ne schismate scinderent qualemcumque ecclesiam: quæ, utcunque esset corruptissima moribus, doctrinis etiam exoticis infecta, non tamen desciverit penitus ab ea doctrina qua ecclesiam Christi fundari docet Paulus. Calv. Epist. Opp. § IX. p. 6.

the same spirit of liberality that, as he himself informs us, he subscribed the Augsburg or Lutheran Confession of faith, and declares the points of difference between the Protestant churches of his day, an insufficient cause for division.[1]

Third Feature. *Let a creed be adopted including only the doctrines held in common by all the orthodox christian denominations, to be termed the Apostolic, Protestant Confession, and let this same creed be used by all denominations as the term of sacramental, ecclesiastical and ministerial communion.* To this each denomination would add its present Formularies for government, discipline and mode of worship, which it might also change or amend from time to time, at its own option, and in its own way. Each denomination might also use its former creed as a book of instruction to whatever extent it saw proper.

The new creed should consist of two parts, a) The so-called *Apostles' Creed.*[2] This little formulary has already been adopted by four fifths of the Protestant church, by the Lutherans in the different kingdoms of Europe, by the Episcopalians in Europe and America, and by the Presbyterian church in this country and probably also in Great Britain. The doctrines contained in it are embraced by every orthodox Protestant denomination on earth. The adoption of this confession would establish the doctrinal idenity of the confederated churches, with that of the apostolic age, and of the first four centuries; which is a matter of no small moment in the popular mind, and has been too much neglected by Protestants. b) The second part should be styled The *United Protestant Confession*, consisting of a selection of those articles from the creeds of the prominent Protestant churches, in which *all* can agree, taking but one article on each subject. As each of these churches acknowledge the christian character of the others, they all virtually admit, that the creed of each church contains every thing essential on the doctrine which any given article treats; whilst each one believes the creed of the other to contain minor errors on some points. Now, *if a selection can be made from all the creeds, which will contain an article on every topic necessary to be introduced, and yet not include any peculiar aspects of doctrines on which the parties differ; all denominations can evidently adopt it; for they fully believe it, and have already acknowledged its*

[1] Epist. Schalingio, p. 113. Farello, p. 9. Mason's Plea, p. 182, 183.

[2] For a copy of this Creed, See page 121.

christian character by acknowledging as brethren those who profess it. And if in order to complete such a creed, it would be necessary to strike out some minor specifications from any article of the existing creeds, in order to make it unexceptionable to all parties, it is evident, that *if nothing be added*, all can still adopt it, because the thing erased must be non-essential, as it is one on which the confederated denominations differ.

It might be thought preferable by some, that a general council of the liberal-minded of all denominations should be called to deliberate and form an original creed, covering the common ground of the Protestant churches. But the testimony of experience is not strongly in favor of the probable results of such a convention. The whole field of theological topics would have to be passed over, and the discussions entered on anew which were passed through in the original formation of the several creeds. But by the far simpler plan here proposed, all these difficulties are obviated. We have in the creed of each denomination the result of its deliberations on all these points. Taking these as the separate voices of the different churches, we can by the principles above suggested, without difficulty frame one creed, in which these voices shall unitedly be heard proclaiming the common faith of all God's people. As the method proposed neither requires nor admits the composition of a single original sentence, it will not be thought presumptuous in the writer to attempt the application of his own rules. He has accordingly formed such a Protestant confession, and appended it to this Appeal.

These two parts would constitute the *Apostolic, Protestant Confession*, required by the third feature of the proposed union. The necessity and advantages of such a creed are evident.

1. *In order to keep heretics out of the church of God.* The duty of the church to exclude from her communion all who deny a fundamental doctrine, is admitted by all whose union is contemplated in this plan. The apostle John expressly declares, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine," (concerning the person of Christ, his real and not merely feigned appearance in the flesh, as the gnostics asserted v. 7, and 1 John 4: 2) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."[1] Now in order to bring men to the test,

[1] 2 John 10, 11.

whose fundamental soundness is suspected, it is absolutely necessary[1] to have a creed, either written or nuncupatory. But whilst the principle of both is the same, a written creed has many confessed advantages, and must necessarily constitute one feature of our catholic union. And having thus enlarged the ground of christian forbearance, and confined the test to the truths held in common by the orthodox churches, the utmost fidelity, and uncompromising spirit ought, and it is believed, would be displayed, in the discipline and the excommunication of any and every one, who denies a single doctrine actually taught (not by inference) in the common creed. One principal cause of laxity in executing discipline for doctrinal deviations from the different creeds, is undoubtedly the conviction, derived from Scripture and reason, that the errors impugned are too trifling to deserve discipline.

2. Such a creed is *necessary, to give prominence to the great, acknowledged truths of Christianity.*

a) It has been doubted whether it is possible to give special prominence to the grand doctrines of Christianity, without becoming incoherent, or illogical, or vapid; but its practicability has often been demonstrated by facts, and ought therefore not to be disputed. The writer many years ago, for some time attended the preaching in the college chapel at Princeton, where the professors of the Seminary and College alternately officiated, all of whom were Calvinists; yet he rarely heard a sentiment conflicting with Lutheranism, and very rarely heard the peculiarities of any sect introduced. The reason is, that those excellent men, feeling that there were in that college, students from all churches, were disposed to avoid unnecessary offence, and yet they dwelt on the whole circle of undisputed christian doctrine. None who heard them would wish more

[1] On this subject we would refer the reader to a "*Lecture on Creeds and Confessions,*" by Rev. Dr. Miller of Princeton, containing many very sound arguments in favor of their indispensable necessity to the purity of the church. Whether the author would consent to the modifications of the subject proposed in this Appeal, and confine the *doctrinal* specifications of the creed to the common ground of Protestantism, we know not. Yet we are almost led to hope so from the fact that all the cases adduced by him, to show the necessity of including non-fundamental matters in it, are cases belonging to government, discipline or forms of worship, on which this plan proposes that the sectarian standards may be retained.

edifying, practical and profitable preaching. The volume of Sermons and Addresses by Dr. Green, published soon after he resigned the presidency of that institution, probably contains some of the sermons then delivered by him. Of that volume, a review was soon after published in the Christian Advocate, and the writer distinctly recollects that the reviewer applauded the unsectarian character of the discourses, and pronounced them free from every thing to which Christians of any religious denomination could with propriety object. The opinion of the reviewer is cited because the writer has not read the work, and therefore could not speak for himself. As indisputable specimens of most excellent religious discussion confined to the undisputed truths of Christianity, the common ground of the orthodox churches, we may cite the publications of the American Tract Society, and of the American Sunday School Union. We might cite the Sermons of president Davies, Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, Burder's Village Sermons, and a number of other invaluable works as substantially confined to the grand, cardinal doctrines of Christianity. And is it not a notorious fact that these and other similar publications, are the works which have exerted the greatest influence in producing the evangelical spirit and enterprise of the present day? Has not the blessed Saviour so signally blessed these works, above all others of a sectarian character, as specially to encourage their multiplication, not indeed so as to exclude others, but to give greater prominence to these?

b) Prominence ought to be given to these undisputed doctrines, *because they alone are* CERTAINLY TRUE. It has been stated, that the aggregate of doctrines believed by the different orthodox denominations may be divided into two classes, those that are believed by them all, and those which are believed by some and disbelieved by others. As men of equal piety, talent and learning differ in respect to the latter, it is but just to suppose, that they are not *so clearly* revealed, and so definitely decided by Scripture, as those points which all agree in finding in that sacred book. And as they are not so clearly revealed, they cannot be essential to salvation, nor so certain in themselves, if our knowledge of them is derived from revelation alone.

Moreover, no one Protestant sect is more numerous than all the others together. The Lutheran church, which is by far the largest, numbers according to the best authorities, a population of about 30,000,000, whilst the whole body of Protestants

amounts to about 70,000,000. Hence, it is evident that the peculiar, distinguishing doctrine of each sect, is disbelieved by the majority of Protestants. If a disputed doctrine be common to several of the larger sects, it then has a majority of all Protestants in its favor, and the probability of its biblical authority is augmented. But those doctrines alone can be regarded as *certainly* scriptural, which the great mass of all enlightened, faithful, acknowledged Christians, who have free access to the Bible, agree in finding in it. These undisputed doctrines alone, we suppose, can be essential to salvation. For it is acknowledged by each sect, that persons denying its distinguishing tenets, do exhibit evidence of piety, and will be saved. Hence, uniting this judgment of all the sects, Protestants do themselves acknowledge, that persons will be saved in the denial of each of the disputed doctrines. Hence, none but the undisputed tenets are in fact judged by Protestants to be essential to salvation.

If these views be correct, all christian teachers should accustom themselves to distinguish in their own minds between the disputed and the undisputed doctrines of Christianity; and in their instructions they ought to give special prominence to the latter. Who would think of adopting as text-book in a College, an author on Chemistry or Natural Philosophy, who introduced the various disputed opinions and theories of a particular class of men, which he regarded as true; but did not distinguish between these opinions, and those facts and principles fully established and admitted by all? Let us go one step further, and suppose the peculiarities referred to be such as are regarded as erroneous by the majority of chemists. Such a book would by common consent be considered unsafe, and be pronounced unphilosophical. Yet this is exactly the practice of all the different denominations. Their standards make no distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental doctrines, between those which are certain, and not disputed by any acknowledged christian denomination, and those which, though believed by some, are disputed and disbelieved by others. It would certainly be conducive to christian union and sound christian knowledge, if the distinction between disputed and undisputed doctrines were distinctly made by including the latter only in the public creed, leaving the former as subjects of amicable difference, and as occasions to exercise that forbearance required by the apostle, in "not judging our brother." For if

we introduce these minor, disputed points into our test, and then by virtue of it, drive out of our church all who in the least differ from us, where is there any room for exercising christian forbearance to a "brother who is weak in the faith." There will be none such left. We think the great apostle evidently contemplated a different practice in the church.

c) Prominence should be given to the undisputed truths of Christianity, because they are the principal means which effect the good accomplished by all the different sects, the principal means of conversion, sanctification and salvation. Those points of sectarian diversity which are true, (but which these are, no man can determine with *absolute* certainty,) are doubtless more or less connected with the more important truths, and have some influence; yet that their effect is comparatively very small, is manifest from the fact, that the Spirit's operations have been extended to all these several denominations. The errors of sects have not destroyed the blessing vouchsafed on the undisputed truths held by them, nor prevented them from being the vehicle of salvation to thousands. It is therefore not the peculiarities of the Lutherans, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians or Methodists, which do the good accomplished by these churches, but that amount of truth held in common by all. Hence this amount of common truth, ought always to be distinguished from the "doubtful disputations," and especially should be made prominent in the public exercises of the sanctuary.

d) Such a creed would serve as *a bond of union, between all true Christians over the whole world.* Doctrine is, in the judgment of mankind, far more important than modes of government. It is diversity of doctrine, even on minor points, which has been adopted as the pretext for the major part of the divisions and contentions among Christians. The adoption of the same creed of fundamentals by all, without any alteration, would give prominence to their actual agreement in essential doctrines, and thus operate as a bond of union among Christians. Those denominations whose standards approximate nearest in doctrine, do in reality cherish and exhibit more fellow feeling than others who agree in form of government, but differ materially in doctrine. This is exemplified in the intimate union and coöperation which have for a long time existed between the Congregational, the Presbyterian, and the Low-Dutch churches of our land. Yet there have always been in

these coöperating and affiliated churches, many persons who differed from each other, fully as much as the creeds of any two orthodox churches do. The contentions in the church about doctrine arise not so much from the existence of some diversity on nonfundamentals, as from the fact, that the majority of existing creeds hold up this minor diversity to constant view, and by ranking the minor and disputed points among the doctrines which are the test of ecclesiastical communion, they perpetuate dissension by conveying and cherishing the impression, that these points are of vital moment. A fundamental creed would exert directly the reverse influence, and give prominence to those doctrines which are *certainly* true, and are not disputed by any acknowleged christian sect; whilst it would imply the minor importance of the disputed points, and teach men to exercise charity in regard to them. This was the character of the Apostles' creed and the Nicene creed, which were the only creeds used in the first three centuries of the church as tests; and their influence as a bond of union among Christians was confessedly very great. Now it is a notorious fact, that all the Protestant churches believe every sentence in these creeds, and can subscribe them without renouncing a single opinion. So far as the sacred records inform us, the apostles themselves did not require half as much as is contained in these creeds. The doctrine on which they laid most stress, is "that Jesus is the Son of God." Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God." Whosoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is the son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." Paul to the Romans[1] expressly says: "This is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Concord in fundamentals is the only doctrinal unity which existed among primitive Christians, and which is necessary. And in all probability, much greater unity in doctrine never will exist in the church on earth, unless God miraculously produces more. But there will be a much greater degree of charity and forbearance, and consequent unity of spirit, in the days of millennial glory, and the freedom of investigation and practice that are advocated in this appeal and would be secured by the plan of union proposed, will, it is believed, powerfully tend not only to produce that unity of spirit, but also to bring about some

[1] Romans 10: 8.

greater unity in nonfundamental points, and perhaps in the forms of government and worship. When Christians shall have full liberty to change their opinions on minor topics, without the fear of prosecution, or the apprehension of popular or ecclesiastical odium as the primitive Christians had, it seems natural to expect, that they will form their opinions more exclusively on the naked evidences of the truth itself. But at present, the avowal of a change of opinion on some points of sectarian diversity, is in some Protestant churches connected with such formidable inconveniences, such as prosecution for heresy, removal from pastoral charge, odium of the brethren etc., that when a man, and especially a minister, has once connected himself with any denomination, he finds it very difficult to engage in the investigation of these minor points of his own or other denominations free from extraneous bias. It may be said, that good men ought to rise above these influences, and be unbiassed by such consequences; but it is far easier to inculcate, than practise this good advice.

e) *Such a creed might also be regarded as a standing testimony of the church in behalf of the truth, and against error.* Let it not be said, that it would contain any thing which a portion of Christians regard as error; for it is to embrace only those doctrines which all the so-called orthodox agree in finding in Scripture. Nor can it in justice be objected, that it would not be explicit or ample enough; it would be far more explicit and five times as ample as the testimony which the church of Christ during the first four centuries ever bore in this way. Nor do we suppose, that any satisfactory reason can be adduced to show, that it is the duty of one part of the church to bear testimony against those opinions of the truth of which, another part are "fully persuaded in their own minds" and thus to "judge one another," (Rom. 14: 1—8.) or that any good has ever resulted from such testimony.

Fourth Feature. *There should be free sacramental, ecclesiastical and ministerial communion, among the confederated churches.*

The first of these elements, namely free *sacramental* communion, may be said already to exist among the churches. For by it is not intended, that the members of any branch of the Protestant church should forsake the sacramental ordinance of the house in which they statedly worship. This could be productive only of confusion, and eventually would create discord

instead of union. And, the writer supposes, that throughout the whole of this plan there is nothing which ought to create disturbance or unsettle the affairs of individual congregations of Christians. But when members of one church are present at a sacramental celebration in another, a public invitation to members of sister churches in good standing, ought always to be given, as it happily is in most churches, and ought to be, as it now generally is, accepted. On this topic, the practice of the churches already coincides with our plan, and no alteration would be desired, excepting that the few churches which have not yet given this public invitation, should also adopt the practice of their brethren.

By *ecclesiastical* communion, we mean that a certificate of good standing in any one church should be a certain passport for admission to regular membership in any other. This element also may be said already to exist in the different branches of the church. Yet its real import is not always understood, nor its legitimate consequences followed out in practice. Christians should regard themselves as members of the church universal as well as of any particular denomination. Hence, when removing to other places, although they naturally and properly connect themselves with their own denomination if there be a church of the kind in the place; yet if there be not, they ought to connect themselves with any other christian church which comes nearest to their views of truth and duty, and in which they could receive and communicate the greatest amount of good. How melancholy is it that persons, professing to be Christians, living in villages and neighborhoods where there is not and cannot be a church of their denomination, remain ten or twenty years, and often for life unconnected with the disciples of the same Redeemer around them, on account of difference on minor points of diversity. How still more distressing the thought that ministers of that blessed Saviour who prayed, that all his disciples might "be one," should sometimes confirm the prejudices of such individuals in the hope of some ultimate far distant gain to their sect!

By *ministerial* communion, we would mean that a certificate of good standing in the ministry of one church, ought to be a passport for admission to the ministerial ranks of any other church, if connected with a credible profession of attachment to the standards of government, discipline and form of worship in the other; and if the judicature applied to, believe the applicant

possessed of the qualifications, gifts and graces required by said standards, and calculated to be useful in the midst of them. This feature also exists in the practice of most of the churches. It is not at all unusual for ministers of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Low Dutch churches to transfer their relations. Between the Lutheran and the Moravian churches in this country the same is the case. Several of our most respected and useful ministers were trained in the church of the United Brethren and transferred their relations to our larger and more destitute Zion. Ministers coming with good credentials from the Evangelical church in Germany, apply indifferently either to the Lutheran or German Reformed church in this country, and are received by both. As the spirit of christian union increases, we suppose these cases of transfer will probably multiply ; and that it will cease in any case to be odious for a minister, at any time of life, to transfer his relations to another church either from want of employment in his own, or because on more mature examination, or observation of their practical effects, he believes the forms of the latter more scriptural or better calculated to advance the kingdom of Christ.

Ministerial communion also implies the mutual acknowledgement of each other's official character by the clergy of the confederated churches. On this point it may be thought some difficulty would exist in the minds of some of our Episcopal brethren. This difficulty, if it exist at all, must be confined to the high-church party, and does not embarrass those who embrace episcopacy, not from the belief of its scriptural authority, but on the ground of expediency ; and of this class far the largest portion of that church has always been. To this class have belonged archbishop Whitgift, Dr. Willet, bishops Bilson, Morton, Jewell, Croft, Burnet, Dr. Whitaker, archbishops Usher, and Tillotson, Drs. Stillingfleet, and Hawies, Sir Peter King, and the venerable Dr. White, late bishop of the Episcopal church in Pennsylvania, as well as, if we mistake not, the great mass of Episcopal divines and laity in this country. In a pamphlet of the last named respectable author, published many years ago, principally to recommend a temporary departure from the line of episcopal succession, on the ground that bishops could not then be had, he uses this language : " Now if even those who hold episcopacy to be of divine right, conceive the obligation to it not to be binding, when that idea would be destructive of public worship ; much more must *they* think so, who indeed

venerate and prefer that form as the most ancient and eligible, but *without any idea of divine right* in the case. This the author believes to be the sentiment of *the great body* of Episcopalians in America, in which respect they have in their favor unquestionably the *sense of the church of England*, and as he believes the opinion of her *most distinguished prelates for piety, virtue and abilities.*" But we have no doubt, that even our high-church brethren do in spirit (though not in form) admit the ministerial character of other clergy ; and we take pleasure in being able to cite the opinion of Dr. H. U. Onderdonk, bishop of the Episcopal church in Pennsylvania in confirmation of our belief. There will therefore be little if any difficulty from this source. See his Tract on "Episcopacy tested by Scripture," p. 6.

Fifth Feature. *In all matters not relating to the government, discipline and forms of worship of individual churches, but pertaining to the common cause of Christianity, let the principle of coöperation regardless of sect, be adopted so far as the nature of the case will admit and as fast as the views of the parties will allow.* The Scriptures present us with no example of regular organization for extensive benevolent operations. The church is thus left to choose in view of the principles of the New Testament, and the results of her own progressive experience. The forms of christian associated agency in the benevolent enterprises of our day, are usually distinguished as voluntary and ecclesiastical. This designation, however, seems not to be entirely accurate ; for the ecclesiastical are also in one sense voluntary, and the voluntary are ecclesisastical, inasmuch as they are conducted by members of the christian church. More properly at least in reference to the subject under discussion, they might be distinguished as catholic and denominational. Now as the denominational are based on the principle of sect, which we have found so detrimental to the Redeemer's kingdom ; it is evident that those who would labor for this unity and aid in accomplishing the Saviour's prayer, should so far as the nature of the case admits, prefer those catholic institutions, in which such as profess to be brethren are found acting out their profession. That these catholic institutions exert a most benign influence in mitigating the rigors of sectarian asperity and in knitting together in love the hearts of those engaged in them, can be doubted by no one acquainted with the history of the American Bible, Tract, Education and

Missionary Societies. That they are at least as efficient as the denominational organizations, and have enjoyed at least as signal evidences of the divine favor, will also not be disputed. If the parent or national societies be supposed to have too great a concentration of power, let coördinate branches be multiplied and be as nearly independent of the parent institution as experience may prove to be desirable, and each branch mainly do the work within its own bounds. Yet the branches also should be catholic in their structure, should embrace all such individuals and congregational societies within their designated bounds, as are willing to coöperate among the different denominations.

But it by no means follows, that denominational societies must of necessity be wholly sectarian in their operations. They are so only when their funds are applied exclusively to the propagation of Christianity connected with the sectarian peculiarities of the church with which they are connected; when beneficiaries are selected exclusively from the members of that denomination; and are sustained only when having in view the ministry in that church. The spirit of catholic union leads us to rejoice at the progress of the Master's kingdom in any of its acknowledged forms, and to be willing to aid an individual to labor in any portion of the Lord's vineyard, rather than that he should not enter the vineyard at all. Let those, therefore, who prefer denominational societies, and desire to promote the unity of Christ's body, adopt the catholic principles of action, and enter into some rules of coöperation and non-interference with the other societies, and although not so entirely favorable to catholicism as the purely catholic institutions, they would be hailed by the friends of union as fellow-laborers in the common cause of apostolic catholicism.

In addition to the superior tendency to union in the catholic or voluntary associations, they enable individual Christians and congregations in their primary capacity, themselves to appropriate their funds immediately to such purposes as they prefer, without the intervention of ecclesiastical bodies. This may lead Christians generally to feel their responsibility more sensibly, to inquire into the merits of different christian enterprises more fully, and thus to become more deeply interested in them.

In order the more perfectly to secure to the catholic associations their ecclesiastical and orthodox character, it might not be amiss for the parent institutions and primary branches to incorporate in their constitutions an acknowledgement of the *Apos-*

tolic Protestant Confession, requiring a subscription to it from all their principal executive officers, their beneficiaries and their missionaries both foreign and domestic. These societies are even now amply secured on this point by their regulations, which require, that every beneficiary shall be member of some christian church, and that every missionary sent either into the domestic or foreign field, shall be in regular connection and good standing in the ministry of some orthodox denomination. Still as the proposed creed is a catholic one, there would be a congruity in its distinctive acknowledgement by catholic societies, and it would tend to give still greater prominence to the common faith.

Sixth Feature. *The Bible should as much as possible be made the text-book in all religious and theological instruction.* It is incontrovertible that in consequence of the great abundance even of good uninspired works, the book of God in its naked form just as its author made it, receives less attention than it merits. We would not, of course, object to elementary books for the instruction of children and youth; yet it seems desirable, that they contain only the common ground of christian doctrine. Many of the books, employed in training the rising generation, are tinctured by sectarian peculiarities, whilst others are professedly sectarian, and cannot fail to leave impressions unfriendly to the cause of union. Every denomination must indeed have full liberty to use such works for purposes of instruction without being upbraided: yet it cannot fail to be perceived, that the unity of Christ's body will be best subserved by occupying the attention of children mainly with the ground and common truths of our holy religion, by preferring elementary books of an unsectarian character, and by the early use of the Bible as the chief book of study and instruction. It is moreover due to that blessed volume, that it should not only be called the best of books, but also treated as such; and be made use of on all suitable occasions, not so much with the view of establishing, by detached quotations, positions already made out, as for the analytic study of the book itself. For this cause Bible classes are deserving of high commendation, even admitting that disputed points are sometimes discussed. The scholar is still employed in the direct study of the word of God, and will learn to judge for himself. Those books of instruction, such as the Bible questions of the American Sunday School Union, which

require the scholar unavoidably and constantly to refer to the Bible for answers, are peculiarly appropriate.

In theological seminaries also the Bible should as much as possible be made the subject of direct study on all the different branches of theology; and on every topic the student should be required to search the Scriptures for himself, and present the results of his examination. This course is in a greater or or less degree already pursued in many of our principal schools of the prophets. Yet it is probable, that it might be carried to greater extent. In Biblical History, in Doctrinal, Practical and Polemical Theology this plan can be employed with the utmost facility, and its undoubted tendency is to obliterate sectarian prejudices and distinctions, and to promote alike christian union and Bible truth. The more we can fix the attention of the student to the word of God, the better shall we be able to raise up a generation of ministers disengaged from the shackles of sectarianism, and firmly planted on the broad platform of the Bible; men possessing the most enlarged views of the Redeemer's kingdom, and ready to devise and execute millennial schemes for its advancement.

The seventh and last Feature, *of union is that missionaries, going into foreign lands, ought to use and profess no other than this common creed, the Apostolic Protestant Confession, and connect with it whatever form of church-government and mode of worship they prefer.*

For the sake of our bleeding Saviour, our sectarian divisions ought not to be carried to heathen lands. The Protestant churches amount to but sixty millions out of seven hundred millions, the probable population of our entire globe, and ought not to spread the Corinthian contagion of sectarianism over the gentile world. In view of all the divisions and contentions, which sectarianism has entailed on the heritage of God, how much better would it be, that the disciples of the Lord, instructed by the experience of three hundred years of discord in the household of faith, should settle down on some better plan for preserving the unity of the church, as her triumphs are extending into heathen countries! The signs of the times imperiously call us to this duty; and a more convenient season cannot be expected in the providence of God. Deeply impressed with the conviction that something can, and therefore something ought to be done, the writer, whose attention has for many years been directed to this subject, felt constrained to address

this fraternal appeal to the American churches. Whether that Divine Saviour, who has promised to be with his disciples unto the end of the world, will incline the hearts of his children to heed this appeal, the future must develope. But whether or not, the writer feels, that he will have discharged a solemn duty, and he cannot resist the conviction that some good will accrue to the kingdom of the blessed Saviour. It is certainly supremely desirable that the unity of the church should be restored in christian lands, and that the sacramental host who bear the standard of the cross into the heathen world, should present an undivided front. Better that the heathen should never hear of Luther, and Calvin, and Arminius, and Wesley, and base their religion purely on the Bible, than that the sectarian divisions connected with these names should be carried among them, still to vex, and agitate and paralize the church.

Whilst the entire pagan world is before them no two sects ought to send missionaries into the same district of country. Thus the immediate collision of sects would be prevented for a season. Yet if they take with them their extended sectarian creeds, it will not be long before dissenters from it, will grow up among their own disciples, and thus the old evil soon return. But if a creed covering only the common, undisputed ground of Christianity be taken, there will be no need of disciplining any but such as ought to be excluded from all christian churches, and therefore could not form any *christian* sect. And as the Scriptures present us with no entire detailed system of church-government, our predilections on that subject are produced chiefly by the influence and example of parents and teachers, and there is little, very little probability of secession from any of the churches in heathen lands, on this ground.

In addition to these fundamental features of the projected union, Christians should endeavor gradually to restore unity or mutual acknowledgement in *name*, as well as in the thing. *Geographical* names should be adopted for all catholic or voluntary associations, which may be erected. In this respect the American Education, Tract, Bible, Missionary and other societies have set a noble example. Each denomination should speak of itself not as *the* church, but as a *branch* of the church. How delightful would it be, to hear Christians habitually employing phraseology indicative of their unity, and to hear them speak of

The Lutheran *Branch* of the church,

The Episcopal *Branch* of the church,

The Presbyterian *Branch* of the church,
The Methodist *Branch* of the church, etc. etc.

Thus would we literally verify the declaration of the Lord's prophet, "And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day there will be one Lord and *his name one.*" Zech. 14: 9.

As to one *Supreme Representative Body*, having even limited jurisdiction over all the confederated bodies, for which some may have been looking as a feature of this plan of union—there was none such in the apostolic age, and we need none. The tendency of such bodies is naturally to an increase of power—they are the foster-mothers of papacy, and dangerous to true liberty of conscience.

Should any circumstances in the Providence of God, hereafter render it necessary, and the great body of the confederated denominations unite in the call, a mere advisory council might be convened, consisting of a small senatorial delegation, in equal numbers from each denomination, without legislative or judicial power, its advice to be confined to the general interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. Yet even such a council ought not to meet statedly nor often, and forms no part of the proposed union.

CHAPTER V.

The Apostolic, Protestant Confession,

for which the reader is now prepared, is nothing more than a selection of such articles or parts of articles, on the topics determined by the several confessions, as are believed by all the so-called orthodox churches. Not a single word is altered or added. The *authority* of this confession is based on the fact, that every sentence, every idea of it, has been sanctioned by one or other of the Protestant conventions that adopted the creeds from which the articles are selected, and by the denominations receiving those creeds. The whole creed has therefore already received the ecclesiastical sanction of acknowledged churches. Its sanction in *its present form* and *for the proposed purpose*, it can only receive by the successive action of such ecclesiastical bodies, and churches and individuals as in the Providence of God may receive it, and publish their assent to it, not as renouncing any of their former opinions, but as regarding this as the test for discipline and communion.

The Apostolic, Protestant Confession.

Part I. *The Apostles' Creed.*

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.—The third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

"I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic or universal church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

Part II. *The United Protestant Confession.*

Art. I. *Of the Scriptures.*

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.[1] Under the name of the Holy Scriptures, or the word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these:

Genesis,	Nehemiah,	Obadiah,
Exodus,	Esther,	Jonah,
Leviticus,	Job,	Micah,
Numbers,	Psalms,	Nahum,
Deuteronomy,	Proverbs,	Habakkuk,
Joshua,	Ecclesiastes,	Zephaniah,
Judges,	Song of Solomon,	Haggai,
Ruth,	Isaiah,	Zechariah,
I. Samuel,	Jeremiah,	Malachi,
II. Samuel,	Lamentations,	Matthew,
I. Kings,	Ezekiel,	Mark,
II. Kings,	Daniel,	Luke,
I. Chronicles,	Hosea,	John,
II. Chronicles,	Joel,	Acts of the Apostles,
Ezra,	Amos,	Epistle to the Romans,

[1] Articles of the Episcopal church, Art. VI. and of the Discipline of the Methodist church, Art. V.

I. Corinthians,	II. Thessalonians,	I. Peter,
II. Corinthians,	I. Timothy,	II. Peter,
Galatians,	II. Timothy,	I. John,
Ephesians,	Titus,	II. John,
Philippians,	Philemon,	III. John,
Colossians,	Hebrews,	Jude,
I. Thessalonians,	Epistle of James,	Revelation.

All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration are no part of the canon of the Scripture.[1]

Art. II. *Of God and the Trinity.*

Our churches with one accord teach, that there is one God, eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, infinite in power, wisdom and goodness, the creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible; and yet, that there are three persons, who are of the same essence and power, and are coëternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[2]

Art. III. *Of the Son of God and the Atonement.*

They likewise teach, that the Word, that is, the Son of God, assumed human nature, so that the two natures human and divine, united in one person, constitute one Christ, who is true God and man; born of the virgin Mary; and truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried, that he might be a sacrifice for the sins of men.[3]

Art. IV. *Of Human Depravity.*

God having made a covenant of works and of life thereupon with our first parents; they, seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, did wilfully transgress and break the covenant by eating the forbidden fruit.[4] By this sin they fell from their

[1] Ratio Disciplinae or Constitution of the Congregational Churches, Art. I. § 2. 3. and Confession of the Presbyterian Church, Art. I. § 2. 3. The Calvinistic Baptists are supposed generally to agree in the views of this Confession, though they have not formally adopted it: and the Confession of the Dutch Reformed Church is also of the same general doctrinal import.

[2] Lutheran and Moravian (United Brethren's) Confession, Art. I.

[3] Idem, Art. III. according to the translation contained in the writer's "Popular Theology."

[4] Congregational, Art. VI. 1.

original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin.[1] They being the root of all mankind, a corrupted nature is conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.[2] The condition of man after the fall of Adam, is such,[3] that his will is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil:[4] but it does not possess the power, without the influence of the Holy Spirit, of being just before God.[5]

Art. V. *Of Justification.*

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith; and not for our own works or deservings.[6] This faith must bring forth good fruits; and it is our duty to perform those good works which God has commanded, because he has enjoined them, and not in the expectation of thereby meriting justification before him.[7] Good works cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment.[8]

Art. VI. *Of the Church.*

The visible church, which is catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation), consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unto this catholic, visible church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God.[9] For the true unity of the church, it is not necessary that the same rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere observed.[10] The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error;[11] nevertheless, Christ always hath had and ever shall have a visible kingdom in this world to the end thereof, of such as believe in him and make profession

[1] Presbyterian, Art. VI. 2.
[2] Congregational, Art. VI. 3.
[3] Episcopal, Art. X.
[4] Presbyt. and Congreg. IX. 1.
[5] Lutheran and Moravian Conf. Art. XVIII.
[6] Episcopal Conf. Art. XI. and Methodist, Art. IX.
[7] Lutheran and Moravian Conf. Art. VI.
[8] Methodist Discip. Art. X. and Episcopal Conf. Art. XII.
[9] Presbyterian Conf. Art. XXV. 2. 3.
[10] Lutheran and Moravian, Art. VII.
[11] Presb. XXV. 3. and Cong. XXVI. 3.

of his name.[1] There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the pope of Rome in any sense be the head thereof.[2]

ART. VII. *Of the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.*

The sacraments were instituted not only as marks of a christian profession among men; but rather as signs and evidences of the divine disposition towards us, tendered for the purpose of exciting and confirming the faith of those who use them.[3] There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.[4] Baptism is ordained not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church; but also to be unto him a sign of the covenant of grace, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.[5] The supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves; but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death.[6]

In this sacrament Christ is not offered up, nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sins of the quick or dead; so that the popish sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most injurious to Christ's one only sacrifice.[7] That doctrine which maintains a change of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or in any other way, is repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason.[8] The denying of the cup to the people, and worshipping the elements, or carrying them about for adoration, are all contrary to the institution of Christ.[9]

[1] Congregational Conf. Art. XXVI. 3.

[2] Congr. XXVI. 4. and Presb. XXV. 6.

[3] Lutheran and Moravian Conf. Art. XIII.

[4] Presb. Art. XXVII. 4. and Congr. XXVIII. 4.

[5] Presb. Art. XXVIII. 1.

[6] Methodist Disc. Art. XVIII. and Episc. Art. XXVIII.

[7] Presb. Art. XXIX. 2. and Cong. XXX. 2.

[8] Presb. Conf. Art. XXIX. 6. and Cong. XXX. 6.

[9] Presb. XXIX. 4. Cong. XXX. 4.

Art. VIII. *Of Purgatory*, etc.

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, worshipping as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is repugnant to the word of God.[1]

Art. IX. *Liberty of Conscience.*

God alone is the Lord of conscience and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any wise contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and, the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.[2]

Art. X. *Of Civil Government.*

God the supreme Lord and king of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good; and to this end hath armed them with power, for the defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil-doers.[3] The power of the civil magistrate extendeth to all men, as well clergy as laity in things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual.[4] Christians ought to yield obedience to the civil officers and laws of the land: unless they should command something sinful; in which case it is a duty to obey God rather than man.[5]

Art. XI. *Communion of Saints.*

Saints are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification: As also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities; which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.[6]

[1] Methodist Disc. Art. XIV. and Episcopal, Art. XXII.

[2] Presb. XX. 2. [3] Cong. XXIV. 1. and Presb. XXIII. 1.

[4] Episc. XXXVII. [5] Lutheran and Moravian, Art. XVI.

[6] Cong. XXVII. 2. and Presb. XXVI. 2.

ART. XII. *Of the Future Judgment and Retribution.*

At the end of the world Christ will appear for judgment, he will raise the dead, he will give to the pious eternal life and endless joys; but will condemn wicked men and devils to be punished without end.[1] As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded, that there shall be a day of judgment, to deter all men from sin; so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come, and may be ever prepared to say, *Come, Lord Jesus, Come quickly. Amen.*[2]

MODE OF OPERATION.

It only remains that a few words be said as to the manner in which this plan could with very little delay be adopted by all who approve of its principles and are desirous of coöperating in restoring unity to the body of Christ.

The call of a general convention of all the friends of the cause would probably not be expedient nor extensively successful; nor indeed is it necessary.

I. Let the friends of union, be they benevolent individuals or associations, extensively circulate this appeal among the different churches, ministers and laity.

II. Let the friends of the cause invite the different ecclesiastical bodies to which they belong to investigate the plan, and so soon as they approve of it adopt it each for itself and resolve henceforth to act upon it.

III. If any orthodox denomination find in it a single article or sentence or idea, which *positively*, (not by inference) teaches what they regard as error, let them strike it out, and adopt the residue. The writer is however not aware that such a clause is found in it. Other denominations would then also omit it as a disputed point, not belonging to the common ground of Protestantism, and the residue remain as the *United Protestant Confession*, regularly adopted by the confederated denominations.

IV. Let vacant churches, and Christians of different denominations in destitute villages and neighborhoods be encouraged

[1] Lutheran and Moravian Conf. Art. XVII.

[2] Presbyterian, XXXIII. 3. Congregational, XXXII. 3.

to unite in adopting the Apostolic Protestant Confession, and plan of union, and join in calling a minister of any one of the confederated churches.

V. Let each of the confederated denominations and missionary societies both voluntary and denominational resolve not to send a minister into any village or neighborhood already adequately supplied by a minister from another branch of the union, but advise their members to unite with their confederated brethren in supporting the minister already stationed among them, or some other one of good standing in either of the confederated denominations, in whose support they can agree.

VI. Whenever the confederated population of a district is unable to support a minister, let application be made to the proper officers of the missionary society of their choice, for such aid as they may need.

VII. Let the education and missionary societies of the confederated churches confer with each other, adopt rules of coöperation, and resolve with renewed ardor by the help of God to supply every destitute place in our land with faithful ministers, and labor with re-doubled zeal in the definite enterprise of sending the Gospel to every rational creature throughout "the field of the world."

This plan would tend to produce unity of spirit first, whilst it will prepare the way for greater unity in external forms; if the Lord designs to effect it. If its prominent features were faithfully carried out, the Protestant church would present as much external unity of organization, as that of the apostolic age, and therefore in all probability as much as is desirable; whilst, happy consummation! the members of the Saviour's body would again have the same care one for another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it! and the intellect of the christian church would no longer be expended in internal contentions, but all her energies be directed to the conversion of the world.

In conclusion, we would commend this humble, well-meant effort to the blessing of that divine Saviour, who has watched over his church amidst all the vicissitudes of her history. If this plan is accordant with his will, may he graciously accept and prosper it; and if not, may he defeat it, and at the day of final account, regard with favor the upright intention from which it has emanated!

NOTE.

To prevent the misapprehension of some remarks, which might otherwise naturally be regarded as allusions to more recent events, it is proper to inform the reader, that the whole of the preceding Appeal was written more than a year ago, and therefore prior to the excision of a portion of the Presbyterian church by the last General Assembly.

As a disciple of the common Saviour, the writer feels a sincere desire for the prosperity of every protestant fundamentally orthodox denomination, and for another "blessed Reformation" in the entire Romish church itself. As such, he feels it his privilege and duty to address a few ideas to his Protestant brethren generally, on the relations which do or ought to subsist between the different portions of Christ's kingdom. And he would respectfully and affectionately request them to test the sentiments advanced, not by their ecclesiastical standards, which are the work of uninspired though good men, but by the "law and the testimony," by the inspired rule of God's holy word. Let them solemnly inquire whether the Protestant churches organized and operating on the principles, fully developed in this Appeal, would not approximate much nearer to the apostolic church, than they now do; whether they could not act much more efficiently and harmoniously in advancing the triumphs of the cross in the heathen and the papal world; and whether we might not even hope again to see the days, when surrounding observers will exclaim: "See how these Christians love one another!"

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